SIR KENNETH & THE DWARFS OF THE CHAPEL.

SIR KENNETH & THE DWARFS OF THE CHAPEL

S. A. Hart. G. Parker.

Edith Plantagenet

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THE WORKS OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT

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My Aunt Margaret's Mirror
The Tapestried Chamber

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CHAPTER XX.

"When beauty leads the lion in her toils,
Such are her charms, he dare not raise his mane,
Far less expand the terror of his fangs.
So great Alcides made his club a distaff,
And spun to please fair Omphalé."

Anonymous.

RICHARD, the unsuspicious object of the dark treachery detailed in the closing part of the last chapter, having effected, for the present at least, the triumphant union of the Crusading princes, in a resolution to prosecute the war with vigour, had it next at heart to establish tranquillity in his own family; and now that he could judge more temperately, to enquire distinctly into the circumstances leading to the loss of his banner, and the nature and the extent of the connection betwixt his kinswoman Edith and the banished adventurer from Scotland.

Accordingly, the Queen and her household were startled with a visit from Sir Thomas de Vaux, requesting the present attendance of the Lady Calista of Montfaucon, the Queen's principal bower-woman, upon King Richard.

"What am I to say, madam?" said the trembling attendant to the Queen. "He will slay us all."

"Nay, fear not, madam," said De Vaux. "His Majesty hath spared the life of the Scottish knight, who was the chief offender, and bestowed him upon the Moorish physician—he will not be severe upon a lady, though faulty."

"Devise some cunning tale, wench," said Berengaria. "My husband hath too little time to make enquiry into the truth."

"Tell the tale as it really happened," said Edith, "lest I tell it for thee."

"With humble permission of her Majesty," said De Vaux, "I would say Lady Edith adviseth well; for although King Richard is pleased to believe what it pleases your Grace to tell him, yet I doubt his having the same deference for the Lady Calista, and in this especial matter."

"The Lord of Gilsland is right," said the Lady Calista, much agitated at the thoughts of the investigation which was to take place; "and, besides, if I had presence of mind enough to forge a plausible story, beshrew me if I think I should have the courage to tell it."

In this candid humour, the Lady Calista was conducted by De Vaux to the King, and made, as she had proposed, a full confession of the decoy by which the unfortunate Knight of the Leopard had been induced to desert his post; exculpating the Lady Edith, who, she was aware, would not fail to exculpate herself, and laying the full burden on the Queen, her mistress, whose share of the frolic, she well knew, would appear the most venial in the eyes of Cœur de Lion. In truth, Richard was a fond, almost an uxorious husband. The first burst of his wrath had long since passed away, and he was not disposed severely to censure what could not now be amended. The wily Lady Calista, accustomed from her earliest childhood to fathom the intrigues of a court, and watch the indications of a sovereign's will, hastened back to the Queen with the speed of a lapwing, charged with the King's commands that she should expect a speedy visit from him; to which the bower-lady added a commentary, founded on her own observation, tending to show that Richard meant just to preserve so much severity as might bring his royal consort to repent of her frolic, and then to extend to her and all concerned his gracious pardon.

"Sits the wind in that corner, wench?" said the Queen, much relieved by this intelligence; "believe me, that, great commander as he is, Richard will find it hard to circumvent us in this matter; and that, as the Pyrenean shepherds are wont to say in my native Navarre, many a one comes for wool and goes back shorn."

Having possessed herself of all the information which Calista could communicate, the royal Berengaria arrayed herself in her most becoming dress and awaited with confidence the arrival of the heroic Richard.

He arrived, and found himself in the situation of a prince entering an offending province, in the confidence that his business will only be to inflict rebuke, and receive submission, when he unexpectedly finds it in a state of complete defiance and insurrection. Berengaria well knew the power of her charms and the extent of Richard's affection, and felt assured that she could make her own terms good, now that the first tremendous explosion of his anger had expended itself without mischief. Far from

listening to the King's intended rebuke, as what the levity of her conduct had justly deserved, she extenuated, nay defended, as a harmless frolic, that which she was accused of. She denied, indeed, with many a pretty form of negation, that she had directed Nectabanus absolutely to entice the knight farther than the brink of the Mount on which he kept watch—and indeed this was so far true, that she had not designed Sir Kenneth to be introduced into her tent,—and then, eloquent in urging her own defence, the Queen was far more so in pressing upon Richard the charge of unkindness, in refusing her so poor a boon as the life of an unfortunate knight, who, by her thoughtless prank, had been brought within the danger of martial law. She wept and sobbed while she enlarged on her husband's obduracy on this score, as a rigour which had threatened to make her unhappy for life, whenever she should reflect that she had given, unthinkingly, the remote cause for such a tragedy. The vision of the slaughtered victim would have haunted her dreams—nay, for aught she knew, since such things often happened, his actual sceptre might have stood by her waking couch. To all this misery of the mind was she exposed by the severity of one who, while he pretended to dote upon her slightest glance, would not forego one act of poor revenge, though the issue was to render her miserable.

All this flow of female eloquence was accompanied with the usual arguments of tears and signs, and uttered with such tone and action, as seemed to show that the Queen's resentment arose neither from pride nor sullenness, but from feelings hurt at finding her consequence with her husband less than she had expected to possess.

The good King Richard was considerably embarrassed. He tried in vain to reason with one whose very jealousy of his affection rendered her incapable of listening to argument, nor could he bring himself to use the restraint of lawful authority to a creature so beautiful in the midst of her unreasonable displeasure. He was, therefore, reduced to the defensive, endeavoured gently to chide her suspicions and soothe her displeasure, and recalled to her mind that she need not look back upon the past with recollections either of remorse or supernatural fear, since Sir Kenneth was alive and well, and had been bestowed by him upon the great Arabian physician, who, doubtless, of all men, knew best how to keep him living. But this seemed the unkindest cut of all, and the Queen's sorrow was renewed at the idea of a Saracen—a mediciner—obtaining a boon, for which, with bare head, and on bended knee, she had petitioned her husband in vain. At this new charge, Richard's patience began rather to give way, and he said, in a serious tone of voice, "Berengaria, the physician saved my life. If it is of value in your eyes, you will not grudge him a higher recompense than the only one I could prevail on him to accept."

The Queen was satisfied she had urged her coquettish displeasure to the verge of safety.

"My Richard," she said, "why brought you not that sage to me,

that England's Queen might show how she esteemed him who could save from extinction the lamp of chivalry, the glory of England, and the light of poor Berengaria's life and hope?"

In a word, the matrimonial dispute was ended; but, that some penalty might be paid to justice, both King and Queen accorded in laying the whole blame on the agent Nectabanus, who (the Queen being by this time well weary of the poor dwarf's humour) was, with his royal consort Guenevra, sentenced to be banished from the Court; and the unlucky dwarf only escaped a supplementary whipping, from the Queen's assurances that he had already sustained personal chastisement. It was decreed farther, that as an envoy was shortly to be dispatched to Saladin acquainting him with the resolution of the Council to resume hostilities so soon as the truce was ended, and as Richard proposed to send a valuable present to the Soldan, an acknowledgment of the high benefit he had derived from the services of El Hakim, the two unhappy creatures should be added to it as curiosities, which, from their extremely grotesque appearance, and the shattered state of their intellect, were gifts that might well pass between sovereign and sovereign.

Richard had that day yet another female encounter to sustain; but he advanced to it with comparative indifference, for Edith, though beautiful, and highly esteemed by her royal relative—nay, although she had from his unjust suspicions actually sustained the injury of which Berengaria only affected to complain, still was neither Richard's wife nor mistress, and he feared her reproaches less, although founded in reason, than those of the Queen, though unjust and fantastical. Having requested to speak with her apart, he was ushered into her apartment, adjoining that of the Queen, whose two female Coptish slaves remained on their knees in the most remote corner during the interview. A thin black veil extended its ample folds over the tall and graceful form of the high-born maiden, and she wore not upon her person any female ornament of what kind soever. She arose and made a low reverence when Richard entered, resumed her seat at his command, and, when he sat down beside her, waited, without uttering a syllable, until he should communicate his pleasure.

Richard, whose custom it was to be familiar with Edith as their relationship authorised, felt this reception chilling, and opened the conversation with some embarrassment.

"Our fair cousin," he at length said, "is angry with us; and we own that strong circumstances have induced us, without cause, to suspect her of conduct alien to what we have ever known in her course of life. But while we walk in this misty valley of humanity, men will mistake shadows for substances. Can my fair cousin not forgive her somewhat vehement kinsman, Richard?"

"Who can refuse forgiveness to *Richard*," answered Edith, "provided Richard can obtain pardon of the *King?*"

"Come, my kinswoman," replied Cœur de Lion, "this is all too

solemn. By Our Lady, such a melancholy countenance, and this ample sable veil, might make men think thou wert a new-made widow, or had lost a betrothed lover, at least. Cheer up: thou hast heard doubtless that there is no real cause for woe; why then keep up the form of mourning?"

"For the departed honour of Plantagenet—for the glory which hath left my father's house."

Richard frowned. "Departed honour! glory which hath left our house!" he repeated, angrily; "but my cousin Edith is privileged. I have judged her too hastily, she has therefore a right to deem of me too harshly. But tell me at least in what I have faulted."

"Plantagenet," said Edith, "should have either pardoned an offence, or punished it. It misbecomes him to assign free men, Christians, and brave knights, to the fetters of the infidels. It becomes him not to compromise and barter, or to grant life under the forfeiture of liberty. To have doomed the unfortunate to death might have been severity, but had a show of justice; to condemn him to slavery and exile, was barefaced tyranny."

"I see, my fair cousin," said Richard, "you are of those pretty ones who think an absent lover as bad as none, or as a dead one. Be patient; half a score of light horsemen may yet follow and redeem the error, if thy gallant have in keeping any secret which might render his death more convenient than his banishment."

"Peace with thy scurrile jests!" answered Edith, colouring deeply. "Think rather, that for the indulgence of thy mood thou hast lopped from this great enterprise one goodly limb, deprived the Cross of one of its most brave supporters, and placed a servant of the true God in the hands of the heathen; hast given, too, to minds as suspicious as thou hast shown thine own in this matter, some right to say, that Richard Cœur de Lion banished the bravest soldier in his camp, lest his name in battle might match his own."

"I—I!" exclaimed Richard, now indeed greatly moved—"am I one to be jealous of renown? I would he were here to profess such an equality! I would waive my rank and my crown, and meet him, manlike, in the lists, that it might appear whether Richard Plantagenet had room to fear or to envy the prowess of mortal man. Come, Edith, thou think'st not as thou say'st. Let not anger or grief for the absence of thy lover make thee unjust to thy kinsman, who, notwithstanding all thy tetchiness, values thy good report as high as that of any one living."

"The absence of my lover?" said the Lady Edith. "But yes—he may be well termed my lover, who hath paid so dear for the title. Unworthy as I might be of such homage, I was to him like a light, leading him forward in the noble path of chivalry; but that I forgot my rank, or that he presumed beyond his, is false, were a king to speak it."

"My fair cousin," said Richard, "do not put words in my mouth which I have not spoken. I said not you had graced this man beyond the favour which a good knight may earn, even from a princess, whatever be his native condition. But, by Our Lady, I know something of this love-gear; it begins with mute respect and distant reverence; but when opportunities occur, familiarity increases, and so—but it skills not talking with one who thinks herself wiser than all the world."

"My kinsman's counsels I willingly listen to, when they are such," said Edith, "as convey no insult to my rank and character."

"Kings, my fair cousin, do not counsel, but rather command," said Richard.

"Soldans do indeed command," said Edith, "but it is because they have slaves to govern."

"Come, you might learn to lay aside this scorn of Soldanrie, when you hold so high of a Scot," said the King. "I hold Saladin to be truer to his word than this William of Scotland, who must needs be called a Lion, forsooth; he hath foully faulted towards me, in failing to send the auxiliary aid he promised. Let me tell thee, Edith, thou mayst live to prefer a true Turk to a false Scot."

"No—never!" answered Edith; "not should Richard himself embrace the false religion which he crossed the seas to expel from Palestine."

"Thou wilt have the last word," said Richard, "and thou shalt have it. Even think of me what thou wilt, pretty Edith. I shall not forget that we are near and dear cousins."

So saying, he took his leave in fair fashion, but very little satisfied with the result of his visit.

It was the fourth day after Sir Kenneth had been dismissed from the camp; and King Richard sat in his pavilion, enjoying an evening breeze from the west, which, with unusual coolness on her wings, seemed breathed from merry England for the refreshment of her adventurous monarch, as he was gradually recovering the full strength which was necessary to carry on his gigantic projects. There was no one with him, De Vaux having been sent to Ascalon to bring up reinforcements and supplies of military munition, and most of his other attendants being occupied in different departments, all preparing for the re-opening of hostilities, and for a grand preparatory review of the army of the Crusaders, which was to take place the next day. The King sat, listening to the busy hum among the soldiery, the clatter from the forges, where horseshoes were preparing, and from the tents of the armourers, who were repairing harness; the voice of the soldiers too, as they passed and repassed, was loud and cheerful, carrying with its very tone an assurance of high and excited courage, and an omen of approaching victory. While Richard's ear drank in these sounds with delight, and while he yielded himself to the visions of conquest and of

" A messenger from Saladin."

A DE RICHEMONT

glory which they suggested, an equerry told him that a messenger from Saladin waited without.

"Admit him instantly," said the King, "and with due honour, Josceline."

The English knight accordingly introduced a person, apparently of no higher rank than a Nubian slave, whose appearance was nevertheless highly interesting. He was of superb stature and nobly formed, and his commanding features, although almost jet-black, showed nothing

of negro descent. He wore over his coal-black locks a milk-white turban, and over his shoulders a short mantle of the same colour, open in front and at the sleeves, under which appeared a doublet of dressed leopard's skin reaching within a handbreadth of the knee. The rest of his muscular limbs, both legs and arms, were bare, excepting that he had sandals on his feet, and wore a collar and bracelets of silver. A straight broadsword, with a handle of boxwood, and a sheath covered with snake-skin, was suspended from his waist. In his right hand he held a short javelin, with a broad, bright steel head, of a span in length, and in his left he led, by a leash of twisted silk and gold, a large and noble staghound.

The messenger prostrated himself, at the same time partially uncovering his shoulders, in sign of humiliation; and having touched the earth with his forehead, arose so far as to rest on one knee, while he delivered to the King a silken napkin, enclosing another of cloth of gold, within which was a letter from Saladin in the original Arabic, with a translation into Norman-English, which may be modernised thus:—

"Saladin, King of Kings, to Melech Ric, the Lion of England. Whereas, we are informed by thy last message, that thou hast chosen war rather than peace, and our enmity rather than our friendship, we account thee as one blinded in this matter, and trust shortly to convince thee of thine error, by the help of our invincible forces of the thousand tribes, when Mohammed, the Prophet of God, and Allah, the God of the Prophet, shall judge the controversy betwixt us. In what remains, we make noble account of thee, and of the gifts which thou hast sent us, and of the two dwarfs, singular in their deformity as Ysop, and mirthful as the lute of Isaack. And in requital of these tokens from the treasure-house of thy bounty, behold we have sent thee a Nubian slave, named Zohauk, of whom judge not by his complexion, according to the foolish ones of the earth, in respect the dark-rinded fruit hath the most exquisite flavour. Know that he is strong to execute the will of his master, as Rustan of Zablestan; also he is wise to give counsel when thou shalt learn to hold communication with him, for the Lord of Speech hath been stricken with silence betwixt the ivory walls of his palace. We commend him to thy care, hoping the hour may not be distant when he may render thee good service. And herewith we bid thee farewell; trusting that our most holy Prophet may yet call thee to a sight of the truth, failing which illumination, our desire is, for the speedy restoration of thy royal health, that Allah may judge between thee and us in a plain field of battle."

And the missive was sanctioned by the signature and seal of the Soldan.

Richard surveyed the Nubian in silence as he stood before him, his looks bent upon the ground, his arms folded on his bosom, with the appearance of a black marble statue of the most exquisite workmanship,

waiting life from the touch of a Prometheus. The King of England, who, as it was emphatically said of his successor Henry the Eighth, loved to look upon A MAN, was well pleased with the thews, sinews, and symmetry of him whom he now surveyed, and questioned him in the lingua franca, "Art thou a pagan?"

The slave shook his head, and raising his finger to his brow, crossed himself in token of his Christianity, then resumed his posture of motionless humility.

"A Nubian Christian, doubtless," said Richard, "and mutilated of the organ of speech by these heathen dogs!"

The mute again slowly shook his head, in token of negative, pointed with his forefinger to Heaven, and then laid it upon his own lips.

"I understand thee," said Richard; "thou dost suffer under the infliction of God, not by the cruelty of man. Canst thou clean an armour and belt, and buckle it in time of need?"

The mute nodded, and stepping towards the coat of mail, which hung with the shield and helmet of the chivalrous monarch upon the pillar of the tent, he handled it with such nicety of address, as sufficiently to show that he fully understood the business of the armour-bearer.

"Thou art an apt, and wilt doubtless be a useful knave—thou shalt wait in my chamber, and on my person," said the King, "to show how much I value the gift of the royal Soldan. If thou hast no tongue it follows thou canst carry no tales, neither provoke me to be sudden by any unfit reply."

The Nubian again prostrated himself till his brow touched the earth, then stood erect, at some paces distant, as waiting for his new master's commands.

"Nay, thou shalt commence thy office presently," said Richard, "for I see a speck of rust darkening on that shield; and when I shake it in the face of Saladin, it should be bright and unsullied as the Soldan's honour and mine own."

A horn was winded without, and presently Sir Henry Neville entered with a packet of despatches. "From England, my lord," he said, as he delivered it.

"From England—our own England!" repeated Richard, in a tone of melancholy enthusiasm. "Alas! they little think how hard their Sovereign has been beset by sickness and sorrow—faint friends and forward enemies." Then opening the despatches, he said, hastily, "Ha! this comes from no peaceful land; they too have their feuds. Neville, begone! I must peruse these tidings alone, and at leisure."

Neville withdrew accordingly, and Richard was soon absorbed in the melancholy details which had been conveyed to him from England, concerning the factions that were tearing to pieces his native dominions: the disunion of his brothers, John and Geoffrey, and the quarrels of both

with the High Justiciary Longchamp, Bishop of Ely; the oppressions practised by the nobles upon the peasantry, and rebellion of the latter against their masters, which had produced everywhere scenes of discord, and in some instances the effusion of blood. Details of incidents mortifying to his pride, and derogatory from his authority, were intermingled with the earnest advice of his wisest and most attached counsellors, that he should presently return to England, as his presence offered the only hope of saving the kingdom from all the horrors of civil discord, of which France and Scotland were likely to avail themselves. Filled with the most painful anxiety, Richard read, and again read, the ill-omened letters, compared the intelligence which some of them contained with the same facts as differently stated in others, and soon became totally insensible to whatever was passing around him, although seated, for the sake of coolness, close to the entrance of his tent, and having the curtains withdrawn, so that he could see and be seen by the guards and others who were stationed without.

Deeper in the shadow of the pavilion, and busied with the task his new master had imposed, sat the Nubian slave, with his back rather turned towards the King. He had finished adjusting and cleaning the hauberk and brigandine, and was now busily employed on a broad pavesse, or buckler, of unusual size, and covered with steel plating, which Richard often used in reconnoitring, or actually storming, fortified places, as a more effectual protection against missile weapons than the narrow triangular shield used on horseback. This pavesse bore neither the royal lions of England, nor any other device, to attract the observation of the defenders of the walls against which it was advanced; the care, therefore, of the armourer was addressed to causing its surface to shine as bright as crystal, in which he seemed to be peculiarly successful. Beyond the Nubian, and scarce visible from without, lay the large dog, which might be termed his brother slave, and which, as if he felt awed by being transferred to a royal owner, was couched close to the side of the mute, with head and ears on the ground, and his limbs and tail drawn close around and under him.

While the Monarch and his new attendant were thus occupied, another actor crept upon the scene, and mingled among the group of English yeomen, about a score of whom, respecting the unusually pensive posture and close occupation of their sovereign, were, contrary to their wont, keeping a silent guard in front of his tent. It was not, however, more vigilant than usual. Some were playing at games of hazard with small pebbles, others spoke together in whispers of the approaching day of battle, and several lay asleep, their bulky limbs folded in their green mantles.

Amid these careless warders glided the puny form of a little old Turk, poorly dressed like a marabout or santon of the desert, a sort of enthusiast, who sometimes ventured into the camp of the Crusaders, though treated always with contumely, and often with violence. Indeed,

the luxury and profligate indulgence of the Christian leaders had occasioned a motley concourse in their tents, of musicians, courtesans, Jewish merchants, Copts, Turks, and all the varied refuse of the Eastern nations; so that the caftan and turban, though to drive both from the Holy Land was the professed object of the expedition, were nevertheless neither an uncommon nor an alarming sight in the camp of the Crusaders. When, however, the little insignificant figure we have described approached so nigh as to receive some interruption from the warders, he dashed his dusky green turban from his head, showed that his beard and eyebrows were shaved like those of a professed buffoon, and that the expression of his fantastic and writhen features, as well as of his little black eyes, which glittered like jet, was that of a crazed imagination.

"Dance, marabout," cried the soldiers, acquainted with the manners of these wandering enthusiasts, "dance, or we will scourge thee with our bowstrings till thou spin as never top did under schoolboy's lash." Thus shouted the reckless warders, as much delighted at having a subject to tease as a child when he catches a butterfly, or a schoolboy upon discovering a bird's nest.

The marabout, as if happy to do their behests, bounded from the earth, and spun his giddy round before them with singular agility, which, when contrasted with his slight and wasted figure, and diminutive appearance, made him resemble a withered leaf twirled round and around at the pleasure of the winter's breeze. His single lock of hair streamed upwards from his bald and shaven head, as if some genie upheld him by it; and indeed it seemed as if supernatural art were necessary to the execution of the wild whirling dance, in which scarce the tiptoe of the performer was seen to touch the ground. Amid the vagaries of his performance, he flew here and there, from one spot to another, still approaching however, though almost imperceptibly, to the entrance of the royal tent; so that, when at length he sunk exhausted on the earth, after two or three bounds still higher than those which he had yet executed, he was not above thirty yards from the King's person.

"Give him water," said one yeoman; "they always crave a drink after their merry-go-round."

"Aha, water, say'st thou, Long Allen?" exclaimed another archer, with a most scornful emphasis on the despised element; "how wouldst like such beverage thyself, after such a morrice dancing?"

"The devil a water-drop he gets here," said a third. "We will teach the light-footed old infidel to be a good Christian, and drink wine of Cyprus."

"Ay, ay," said a fourth; "and in case he be restive, fetch thou Dick Hunter's horn, that he drenches his mare withal."

A circle was instantly formed around the prostrate and exhausted dervise, and while one tall yeoman raised his feeble form from the

ground, another presented to him a huge flagon of wine. Incapable of speech, the old man shook his head, and waved away from him with his hand the liquor forbidden by the Prophet; but his tormentors were not thus to be appeased.

"The horn, the horn!" exclaimed one. "Little difference between a Turk and a Turkish horse, and we will use him conforming."

"By Saint George, you will choke him!" said Long Allen; "and, besides, it is a sin to throw away upon a heathen dog as much wine as would serve a good Christian for a treble night-cap."

"Thou know'st not the nature of these Turks and pagans, Long Allen," replied Henry Woodstall; "I tell thee, man, that this flagon of Cyprus will set his brains a-spinning, just in the opposite direction that they went whirling in the dancing, and so bring him, as it were, to himself again. Choke? he will no more choke on it than Ben's black bitch on the pound of butter."

"And for grudging it," said Tomalin Blacklees, "why should'st thou grudge the poor paynim-devil a drop of drink on earth, since thou know'st he is not to have a drop to cool the tip of his tongue through a long eternity?"

"That were hard laws, look ye," said Long Allen, "only for being a Turk, as his father was before him. Had he been Christian turned heathen, I grant you the hottest corner had been good winter quarters for him."

"Hold thy peace, Long Allen," said Henry Woodstall; "I tell thee that tongue of thine is not the shortest limb about thee, and I prophesy that it will bring thee into disgrace with Father Francis, as once about the black-eyed Syrian wench. But here comes the horn. Be active a bit, man, wilt thou? and just force open his teeth with the haft of thy dudgeon-dagger."

"Hold, hold—he is conformable," said Tomalin; "see, see, he signs for the goblet—give him room, boys. *Oop sey es*, quoth the Dutchman—down it goes like lamb's wool! Nay, they are true topers when once they begin; your Turk never coughs in his cup, or stints in his liquoring."

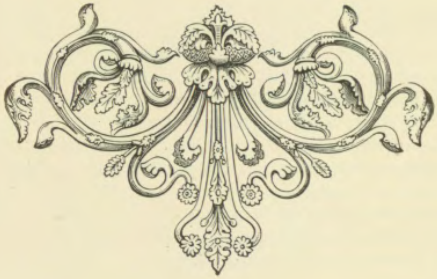
In fact, the dervise, or whatever he was, drank, or at least seemed to drink, the large flagon to the very bottom at a single pull; and when he took it from his lips, after the whole contents were exhausted, only uttered, with a deep sigh, the words "Allah kerim," or "God is merciful." There was a laugh among the yeomen who witnessed this pottle-deep potation, so obstreperous as to rouse and disturb the King, who, raising his finger, said angrily, "How, knaves, no respect, no observance?"

All were at once hushed into silence, well acquainted with the temper of Richard, which at some times admitted of much military familiarity, and at others exacted the most precise respect, although the latter humour was of much more rare occurrence. Hastening to a

more reverent distance from the royal person, they attempted to drag along with them the marabout, who, exhausted apparently by previous fatigue, or overpowered by the potent draught he had just swallowed, resisted being moved from the spot, both with struggles and groans.

"Leave him still, ye fools," whispered Long Allen to his mates; "by Saint Christopher, you will make our Dickon go beside himself, and we shall have his dagger presently fly at our costards. Leave him alone, in less than a minute he will sleep like a dormouse."

At the same moment, the Monarch darted another impatient glance to the spot, and all retreated in haste, leaving the dervise on the ground, unable, as it seemed, to stir a single limb or joint of his body. In a moment afterward, all was as still and quiet as it had been before the intrusion.



CHAPTER XXI.

"And wither'd Murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost."

Macbeth.

FOR the space of a quarter of an hour, or longer, after the incident related, all remained perfectly quiet in the front of the royal habitation. The King read and mused in the entrance of his pavilion; behind, and with his back turned to the same entrance, the Nubian slave still burnished the ample pavesse; in front of all, at an hundred paces distant, the yeomen of the guard stood, sat, or lay extended on the grass, attentive to their own sports, but pursuing them in silence; while on the esplanade betwixt them and the front of the tent lay, scarcely to be distinguished from a bundle of rags, the senseless form of the marabout.

But the Nubian had the advantage of a mirror, from the brilliant reflection which the surface of the highly polished shield now afforded, by means of which he beheld, to his alarm and surprise, that the marabout raised his head gently from the ground, so as to survey all around him, moving with a well-adjusted precaution, which seemed entirely inconsistent with a state of ebriety. He couched his head instantly, as if satisfied he was unobserved, and began, with the slightest possible appearance of voluntary effort, to drag himself, as if by chance, ever nearer and nearer to the King, but stopping and remaining fixed at intervals, like the spider, which, moving towards her object, collapses into apparent lifelessness when she thinks she is the subject of observation. This species of movement appeared suspicious to the

Ethiopian, who, on his part, prepared himself, as quietly as possible, to interfere, the instant that interference should seem to be necessary.

The marabout meanwhile glided on gradually and imperceptibly, serpent-like, or rather snail-like, till he was about ten yards' distance from Richard's person, when, starting on his feet, he sprang forward with the bound of a tiger, stood at the King's back in less than an instant, and brandished aloft the cangiar, or poniard, which he had hidden in his sleeve. Not the presence of his whole army could have saved their heroic Monarch—but the motions of the Nubian had been as well calculated as those of the enthusiast, and ere the latter could strike the former caught his uplifted arm. Turning his fanatical wrath upon what thus unexpectedly interposed betwixt him and his object, the Charegite, for such was the seeming marabout, dealt the Nubian a blow with the dagger, which, however, only grazed his arm, while the far superior strength of the Ethiopian easily dashed him to the ground. Aware of what had passed, Richard had now arisen, and with little more of surprise, anger, or interest of any kind in his countenance than an ordinary man would show in brushing off and crushing an intrusive wasp, caught up the stool on which he had been sitting, and exclaiming only, "Ha, dog!" dashed almost to pieces the skull of the assassin, who uttered twice, once in a loud, and once in a broken tone, the words "Allah ackbar!"—God is victorious—and expired at the King's feet.

"Ye are careful warders," said Richard to his archers, in a tone of scornful reproach, as, aroused by the bustle of what had passed, in terror and tumult they now rushed into his tent;—"watchful sentinels ye are, to leave me to do such hangman's work with my own hand. Be silent, all of you, and cease your senseless clamour! saw ye never a dead Turk before? Here—cast that carrion out of the camp, strike the head from the trunk, and stick it on a lance, taking care to turn the face to Mecca, that he may the easier tell the foul impostor, on whose inspiration he came hither, how he has sped on his errand. For thee, my swart and silent friend," he added, turning to the Ethiopian——"But how's this? thou art wounded, and with a poisoned weapon, I warrant me, for by force of stab so weak an animal as that could scarce hope to do more than raze the lion's hide. Suck the poison from his wound, one of you—the venom is harmless on the lips, though fatal when it mingles with the blood."

The yeomen looked on each other confusedly and with hesitation, the apprehension of so strange a danger prevailing with those who feared no other.

"How now, sirrahs," continued the King, "are you dainty-lipped, or do you fear death, that you dally thus?"

"Not the death of a man," said Long Allen, to whom the King looked as he spoke; "but methinks I would not die like a poisoned rat for the sake of a black chattel there, that is bought and sold in a market like a Martlemas ox."

"His Grace speaks to men of sucking poison," muttered another yeoman, "as if he said, Go to, swallow a gooseberry!"

"Nay," said Richard, "I never bade man do that which I would not do myself."

And, without further ceremony, and in spite of the general expostulations of those around, and the respectful opposition of the Nubian himself, the King of England applied his lips to the wound of the black slave, treating with ridicule all remonstrances, and overpowering all resistance. He had no sooner intermitted his singular occupation, than the Nubian started from him, and, casting a scarf over his arm, intimated by gestures, as firm in purpose as they were respectful in manner, his determination not to permit the Monarch to renew so degrading an employment. Long Allen also interposed, saying, that if it were necessary to prevent the King engaging again in a treatment of this kind, his own lips, tongue, and teeth were at the service of the negro (as he called the Ethiopian), and that he would eat him up bodily, rather than King Richard's mouth should again approach him.

Neville, who entered with other officers, added his remonstrances.

"Nay, nay, make not a needless halloo about a hart that the hounds have lost, or a danger when it is over," said the King; "the wound will be a trifle, for the blood is scarce drawn—an angry cat had dealt a deeper scratch—and for me, I have but to take a drachm of orvietan by way of precaution, though it is needless."

Thus spoke Richard, a little ashamed, perhaps, of his own condescension, though sanctioned both by humanity and gratitude. But when Neville continued to make remonstrances on the peril to his royal person, the King imposed silence on him.

"Peace, I prithee—make no more of it; I did it but to show these ignorant, prejudiced knaves how they might help each other when these cowardly caitiffs come against us with sarbacanes and poisoned shafts. But," he added, "take thee this Nubian to thy quarters, Neville—I have changed my mind touching him; let him be well cared for: but, hark in thine ear—see that he escapes thee not, there is more in him than seems. Let him have all liberty, so that he leave not the camp. And you, ye beef-devouring, wine-swilling English mastiffs, get ye to your guard again, and be sure you keep it more warily. Think not you are now in your own land of fair play, where men speak before they strike, and shake hands ere they cut throats. Danger in our land walks openly, and with his blade drawn, and defies the foe whom he means to assault; but here, he challenges you with a silk glove instead of a steel gauntlet, cuts your throat with the feather of a turtle-dove, stabs you with the tongue of a priest's brooch, or throttles you with the lace of my lady's bodice. Go to—keep your eyes open and your mouths shut—drink less and look sharper about you; or I will place your huge stomachs on such short allowance as would pinch the stomach of a patient Scottishman."

The yeomen, abashed and mortified, withdrew to their post, and Neville was beginning to remonstrate with his master upon the risk of passing over thus slightly their negligence upon their duty, and

"The king applied his lips to the wound" (p. 216).

the propriety of an example in a case so peculiarly aggravated as the permitting one so suspicious as the marabout to approach within dagger's length of his person, when Richard interrupted him with "Speak not of it, Neville—wouldst thou have me avenge a petty risk to myself more severely than the loss of England's banner? It has been stolen—stolen by a thief, or delivered up by a traitor, and no blood has been shed for it. My sable friend, thou art an expounder of mysteries, saith the illustrious Soldan—now would I give thee thine

own weight in gold, if, by raising one still blacker than thyself, or by what other means thou wilt, thou couldst show me the thief who did mine honour that wrong. What say'st thou? ha!"

The mute seemed desirous to speak, but uttered only that imperfect sound proper to his melancholy condition, then folded his arms, looked on the King with an eye of intelligence, and nodded in answer to his question.

"How!" said Richard, with joyful impatience. "Wilt thou undertake to make discovery in this matter?"

The Nubian slave repeated the same motion.

"But how shall we understand each other?" said the King. "Canst thou write, good fellow?"

The slave again nodded in assent.

"Give him writing-tools," said the King. "They were readier in my father's tent than mine, but they be somewhere about, if this scorching climate have not dried up the ink. Why, this fellow is a jewel—a black diamond, Neville."

"So please you, my liege," said Neville, "if I might speak my poor mind, it were ill dealing in this ware. This man must be a wizard, and wizards deal with the Enemy, who hath most interest to sow tares among the wheat, and bring dissension into our councils, and——"

"Peace, Neville," said Richard. "Hollo to your northern hound when he is close on the haunch of the deer, and hope to recall him, but seek not to stop Plantagenet when he hath hope to retrieve his honour."

The slave, who during this discussion had been writing, in which art he seemed skilful, now arose, and pressing what he had written to his brow, prostrated himself as usual, ere he delivered it into the King's hands. The scroll was in French, although their intercourse had hitherto been conducted by Richard in the lingua franca.

"To Richard, the conquering and invincible King of England, this from the humblest of his slaves. Mysteries are the sealed caskets of Heaven, but wisdom may devise means to open the lock. Were your slave stationed where the leaders of the Christian host were made to pass before him in order, doubt nothing, that if he who did the injury whereof my King complains shall be among the number, he may be made manifest in his iniquity, though it be hidden under seven veils."

"Now, by Saint George!" said King Richard, "thou hast spoken most opportunely. Neville, thou know'st that, when we muster our troops to-morrow, the princes have agreed that, to expiate the affront offered to England in the theft of her Banner, the leaders should pass our new standard as it floats on Saint George's Mount, and salute it with formal regard. Believe me, the secret traitor will not dare to absent himself from an expurgation so solemn, lest his very absence

should be matter of suspicion. There will we place our sable man of counsel, and, if his art can detect the villain, leave me to deal with him."

"My liege," said Neville, with the frankness of an English baron, "beware what work you begin. Here is the concord of our holy league unexpectedly renewed; will you, upon such suspicion as a negro slave can instil, tear open wounds so lately closed—or will you use the solemn procession, adopted for the reparation of your honour, and establishment of unanimity amongst the discording princes, as the means of again finding out new cause of offence, or reviving ancient quarrels? It were scarce too strong to say, this were a breach of the declaration your Grace made to the assembled Council of the Crusade."

"Neville," said the King, sternly interrupting him, "thy zeal makes thee presumptuous and unmannerly. Never did I promise to abstain from taking whatever means were most promising, to discover the infamous author of the attack on my honour. Ere I had done so, I would have renounced my kingdom—my life. All my declarations were under this necessary and absolute qualification;—only, if Austria had stepped forth and owned the injury like a man, I proffered, for the sake of Christendom, to have forgiven *him*."

"But," continued the baron, anxiously, "what hope that this juggling slave of Saladin will not palter with your Grace?"

"Peace, Neville," said the King; "thou think'st thyself mighty wise, and art but a fool. Mind thou my charge touching this fellow—there is more in him than thy Westmoreland wit can fathom. And thou, swart and silent, prepare to perform the feat thou hast promised, and, by the word of a King, thou shalt choose thine own recompense. Lo, he writes again."

The mute accordingly wrote and delivered to the King, with the same form as before, another slip of paper, containing these words: "The will of the King is the law to his slave; nor doth it become him to ask guerdon for discharge of his devoir."

"*Guerdon* and *devoir*!" said the King, interrupting himself as he read, and speaking to Neville in the English tongue with some emphasis on the words. "These Eastern people will profit by the Crusaders; they are acquiring the language of chivalry! And see, Neville, how discomposed that fellow looks—were it not for his colour he would blush. I should not think it strange if he understood what I say; they are perilous linguists."

"The poor slave cannot endure your Grace's eye," said Neville; "it is nothing more."

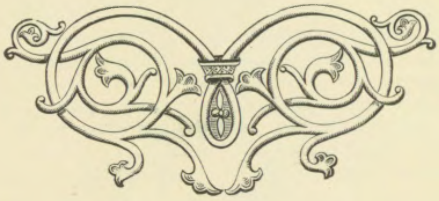
"Well, but," continued the King, striking the paper with his finger, as he proceeded, "this bold scroll proceeds to say, that our trusty mute is charged with a message from Saladin to the Lady Edith Plantagenet, and craves means and opportunity to deliver it. What think'st thou of a request so modest—ha, Neville?"

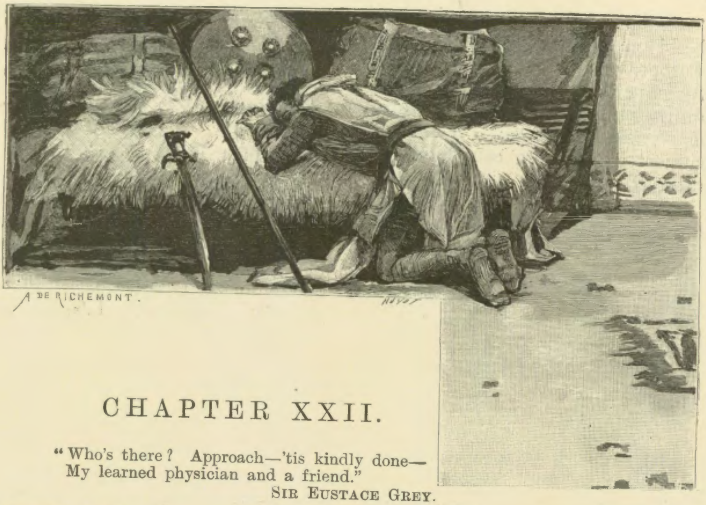
"I cannot say," said Neville, "how such freedom may relish with your Grace; but the lease of the messenger's neck would be a short one, who should carry such a request to the Soldan on the part of your Majesty."

"Nay, I thank Heaven that I covet none of his sunburnt beauties," said Richard; "and for punishing this fellow for discharging his master's errand, and that when he has just saved my life—methinks it were something too summary. I'll tell thee, Neville, a secret—for, although our sable and mute minister be present, he cannot, thou know'st, tell it over again, even if he should chance to understand us: I tell thee, that, for this fortnight past, I have been under a strange spell, and I would I were disenchanted. There has no sooner any one done me good service, but lo you, he cancels his interest in me by some deep injury; and, on the other hand, he who hath deserved death at my hands for some treachery or some insult, is sure to be the very person, of all others, who confers upon me some obligation that overbalances his demerits, and renders respite of his sentence a debt due from my honour. Thus, thou seest, I am deprived of the best part of my royal function, since I can neither punish men nor reward them. Until the influence of this disqualifying planet be passed away, I will say nothing concerning the request of this our sable attendant, save that it is an unusually bold one, and that his best chance of finding grace in our eyes will be, to endeavour to make the discovery which he proposes to achieve in our behalf. Meanwhile, Neville, do thou look well to him, and let him be honourably cared for. And hark thee once more," he said, in a low whisper: "seek out yonder hermit of Engaddi, and bring him to me forthwith, be he saint or savage, madman or sane. Let me see him privately."

Neville retired from the royal tent, signing to the Nubian to follow him, and much surprised at what he had seen and heard, and especially at the unusual demeanour of the King. In general, no task was so easy as to discover Richard's immediate course of sentiment and feeling, though it might, in some cases, be difficult to calculate its duration; for no weathercock obeyed the changing wind more readily than the King his gusts of passion. But, on the present occasion, his manner seemed unusually constrained and mysterious, nor was it easy to guess whether displeasure or kindness predominated in his conduct towards his new dependant, or in the looks with which, from time to time, he regarded him. The ready service which the King had rendered to counteract the bad effects of the Nubian's wound, might seem to balance the obligation conferred on him by the slave, when he intercepted the blow of the assassin; but it seemed, as a much longer account remained to be arranged between them, that the Monarch was doubtful whether the settlement might leave him, upon the whole, debtor or creditor, and that, therefore, he assumed, in the meantime, a neutral demeanour, which might suit with either character. As for the

Nubian, by whatever means he had acquired the art of writing the European languages, the King remained convinced that the English tongue at least was unknown to him, since, having watched him closely during the last part of the interview, he conceived it impossible for any one understanding a conversation, of which he was himself the subject, to have so completely avoided the appearance of taking an interest in it.





CHAPTER XXII.

"Who's there? Approach—'tis kindly done—
My learned physician and a friend."
SIR EUSTACE GREY.

OUR narrative retrogrades to a period shortly previous to the incidents last mentioned, when, as the reader must remember, the unfortunate Knight of the Leopard bestowed upon the Arabian physician by King Richard rather as a slave than in any other capacity, was exiled from the camp of the Crusaders, in whose ranks he had so often and so brilliantly distinguished himself. He followed his new master, for so we must now term the Hakim, to the Moorish tents which contained his retinue and his property, with the stupefied feelings of one who, fallen from the summit of a precipice, and escaping unexpectedly with life, is just able to drag himself from the fatal spot, but without the power of estimating the extent of the damage which he has sustained. Arrived at the tent, he threw himself, without speech of any kind, upon a couch of dressed buffalo's hide, which was pointed out to him by his conductor, and, hiding his face betwixt his hands, groaned heavily, as if his heart were on the point of bursting. The physician heard him, as he was giving orders to his numerous domestics to prepare for their departure the next morning before daybreak, and, moved with compassion, interrupted his occupation, to sit down, crosslegged, by the side of his couch, and administer comfort according to the Oriental manner.

"My friend," he said, "be of good comfort; for what sayeth the poet?—it is better that a man should be the servant of a kind master, than the slave of his own wild passions. Again, be of good courage; because, whereas Ysouf Ben Yagoube was sold to a king by his

brethren, even to Pharaoh King of Egypt, thy King hath, on the other hand, bestowed thee on one who will be to thee as a brother."

Sir Kenneth made an effort to thank the Hakim, but his heart was too full, and the indistinct sounds which accompanied his abortive attempts to reply induced the kind physician to desist from his premature endeavours at consolation. He left his new domestic, or guest, in quiet, to indulge his sorrows, and having commanded all the necessary preparations for their departure on the morning, sat down upon the carpet of the tent, and indulged himself in a moderate repast. After he had thus refreshed himself, similar viands were offered to the Scottish knight; but though the slaves let him understand that the next day would be far advanced ere they would halt for the purpose of refreshment, Sir Kenneth could not overcome the disgust which he felt against swallowing any nourishment, and could be prevailed upon to taste nothing, saving a draught of cold water.

He was awake long after his Arab host had performed his usual devotions and betaken himself to his repose; nor had sleep visited him at the hour of midnight, when a movement took place among the domestics which, though attended with no speech, and very little noise, made him aware they were loading the camels and preparing for departure. In the course of these preparations, the last person who was disturbed, excepting the physician himself, was the Knight of Scotland, whom, about three in the morning, a sort of major-domo, or master of the household, acquainted that he must arise. He did so without further answer, and followed him into the moonlight, where stood the camels, most of which were already loaded, and one only remained kneeling until its burden should be completed.

A little apart from the camels stood a number of horses ready bridled and saddled, and the Hakim himself, coming forth, mounted on one of them with as much agility as the grave decorum of his character permitted, and directed another, which he pointed out, to be led towards Sir Kenneth. An English officer was in attendance, to escort them through the camp of the Crusaders, and to ensure their leaving it in safety, and all was ready for their departure. The pavilion which they had left was, in the meanwhile, struck with singular dispatch, and the tent-poles and coverings composed the burden of the last camel—when the physician, pronouncing solemnly the verse of the Koran, "God be our guide, and Mahommed our protector, in the desert as in the watered field," the whole cavalcade was instantly in motion.

In traversing the camp, they were challenged by the various sentinels who maintained guard there, and suffered to proceed in silence, or with a muttered curse upon their prophet, as they passed the post of some more zealous Crusader. At length, the last barriers were left behind them, and the party formed themselves for the march with military precaution. Two or three horsemen advanced in front as a vanguard; one or two remained a bowshot in the rear; and, wherever

which the muezzins thunder at morning from the minaret of every mosque.

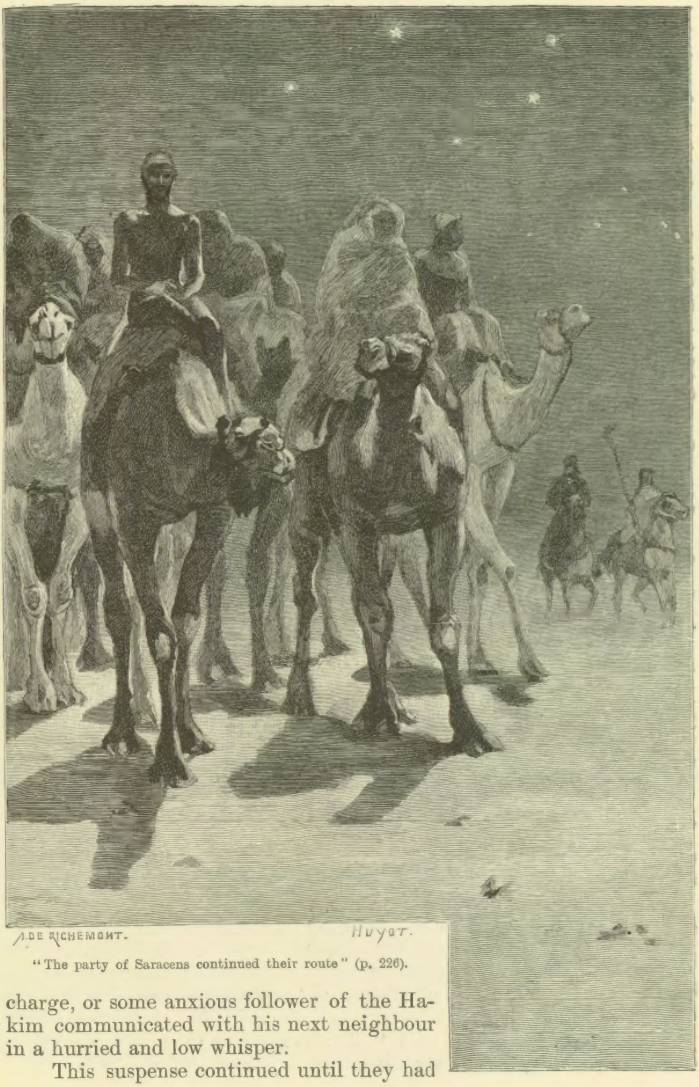
"To prayer, to prayer! God is the one God. To prayer, to prayer! Mahommed is the prophet of God. To prayer, to prayer! Time is flying from you. To prayer, to prayer! Judgment is drawing nigh to you."

In an instant each Moslem cast himself from his horse, turned his face towards Mecca, and performed with sand an imitation of those ablutions, which were elsewhere required to be made with water, while each individual, in brief but fervent ejaculations, recommended himself to the care, and his sins to the forgiveness, of God and the Prophet.

Even Sir Kenneth, whose reason at once and prejudices were offended by seeing his companions in that which he considered as an act of idolatry, could not help respecting the sincerity of their misguided zeal, and being stimulated by their fervour to apply supplications to Heaven in a purer form, wondering, meanwhile, what new-born feelings could teach him to accompany in prayer, though with varied invocation, those very Saracens, whose heathenish worship he had conceived a crime dishonourable to the land in which high miracles had been wrought, and where the daystar of redemption had arisen.

The act of devotion, however, though rendered in such strange society, burst purely from his natural feelings of religious duty, and had its usual effect in composing the spirits, which had been long harassed by so rapid a succession of calamities. The sincere and earnest approach of the Christian to the throne of the Almighty teaches the best lesson of patience under affliction; since wherefore should we mock the Deity with supplications, when we insult Him by murmuring under His decrees? or how, while our prayers have in every word admitted the vanity and nothingness of the things of time in comparison to those of eternity, should we hope to deceive the Searcher of Hearts by permitting the world and worldly passions to reassume the reins even immediately after a solemn address to Heaven? But Sir Kenneth was not of these. He felt himself comforted and strengthened, and better prepared to execute or submit to whatever his destiny might call upon him to do or to suffer.

Meanwhile, the party of Saracens regained their saddles and continued their route, and the tale-teller Hassan resumed the thread of his narrative; but it was no longer to the same attentive audience. A horseman, who had ascended some high ground on the right hand of the little column, had returned on a speedy gallop to El Hakim, and communicated with him. Four or five more cavaliers had then been dispatched, and the little band, which might consist of about twenty or thirty persons, began to follow them with their eyes, as men from whose gestures, and advance or retreat, they were to augur good or evil. Hassan, finding his audience inattentive, or being himself attracted by the dubious appearances on the flank, stinted in his song; and the march became silent, save when a camel-driver called out to his patient



"The party of Saracens continued their route" (p. 226).

charge, or some anxious follower of the Hakim communicated with his next neighbour in a hurried and low whisper.

This suspense continued until they had

rounded a ridge, composed of hillocks of sand, which concealed from their main body the object that had created this alarm among their scouts. Sir Kenneth could now see at the distance of a mile or more a dark object moving rapidly on the bosom of the desert, which his experienced eye recognised for a party of cavalry, much superior to their own in numbers, and, from the thick and frequent flashes which flung back the level beams of the rising sun, it was plain that these were Europeans in their complete panoply.

The anxious looks which the horsemen of El Hakim now cast upon their leader seemed to indicate deep apprehension; while he, with gravity as undisturbed as when he called his followers to prayer, detached two of his best-mounted cavaliers, with instructions to approach as closely as prudence permitted to these travellers of the desert, and observe more minutely their numbers, their character, and, if possible, their purpose. The approach of danger, or what was feared as such, was like a stimulating draught to one in apathy, and recalled Sir Kenneth to himself and his situation.

"What fear you from these Christian horsemen, for such they seem?" he said to the Hakim.

"Fear!" said El Hakim, repeating the word disdainfully. "The sage fears nothing but Heaven, but ever expects from wicked men the worst which they can do."

"They are Christians," said Sir Kenneth, "and it is the time of truce: why should you fear a breach of faith?"

"They are the priestly soldiers of the Temple," answered El Hakim, "whose vow limits them to know neither truth nor faith with the worshippers of Islam. May the prophet blight them, both root, branch, and twig! Their peace is war, and their faith is falsehood. Other invaders of Palestine have their times and moods of courtesy. The lion Richard will spare when he has conquered; the eagle Philip will close his wing when he has stricken a prey; even the Austrian bear will sleep when he is gorged; but this horde of ever-hungry wolves know neither pause nor satiety in their rapine. Seest thou not that they are detaching a party from their main body, and that they take an eastern direction? Yon are their pages and squires, whom they train up in their accursed mysteries, and whom, as lighter mounted, they send to cut us off from our watering-place. But they will be disappointed: *I* know the war of the desert yet better than they."

He spoke a few words to his principal officer, and his whole demeanour and countenance was at once changed from the solemn repose of an Eastern sage, accustomed more to contemplation than to action, into the prompt and proud expression of a gallant soldier, whose energies are roused by the near approach of a danger which he at once foresees and despises.

To Sir Kenneth's eyes the approaching crisis had a different aspect, and when Adonbec said to him, "Thou must tarry close by my side," he answered solemnly in the negative.

"Yonder," he said, "are my comrades in arms—the men in whose society I have vowed to fight or fall; on their banner gleams the sign of our most blessed redemption; I cannot fly from the Cross in company with the Crescent."

"Fool!" said the Hakim; "their first action would be to do thee to death, were it only to conceal their breach of the truce."

"Of that I must take my chance," replied Sir Kenneth; "but I wear not the bonds of the infidels an instant longer than I can cast them from me."

"Then will I compel thee to follow me," said El Hakim.

"Compel!" answered Sir Kenneth, angrily. "Wert thou not my benefactor, or one who has showed will to be such, and were it not that it is to thy confidence I owe the freedom of these hands, which thou mightst have loaded with fetters, I would show thee that, unarmed as I am, compulsion would be no easy task."

"Enough, enough," replied the Arabian physician; "we lose time even when it is becoming precious."

So saying, he threw his arm aloft, and uttered a loud and shrill cry, as a signal to those of his retinue, who instantly dispersed themselves on the face of the desert, in as many different directions as a chaplet of beads when the string is broken. Sir Kenneth had no time to note what ensued; for, at the same instant, the Hakim seized the rein of his steed, and putting his own to its mettle, both sprung forth at once with the suddenness of light, and at a pitch of velocity which almost deprived the Scottish knight of the power of respiration, and left him absolutely incapable, had he been desirous, to have checked the career of his guide. Practised as Sir Kenneth was in horsemanship from his earliest youth, the speediest horse he had ever mounted was a tortoise in comparison to those of the Arabian sage. They spurned the sand from behind them, they seemed to devour the desert before them, miles flew away with minutes, and yet their strength seemed unabated, and their respiration as free as when they first started upon the wonderful race. The motion, too, as easy as it was swift, seemed more like flying through the air than riding on the earth, and was attended with no unpleasant sensation, save the awe naturally felt by one who is moving at such astonishing speed, and the difficulty of breathing occasioned by their passing through the air so rapidly.

It was not until after an hour of this portentous motion, and when all human pursuit was far, far behind, that the Hakim at length relaxed his speed, and, slackening the pace of the horses into a hand gallop, began, in a voice as composed and even as if he had been walking for the last hour, a descant upon the excellence of his coursers to the Scot, who, breathless, half blind, half deaf, and altogether giddy, from the rapidity of this singular ride, hardly comprehended the words which flowed so freely from his companion.

"These horses," he said, "are of the breed called the Winged, equal

in speed to aught excepting the Borak of the prophet. They are fed on the golden barley of Yemen, mixed with spices, and with a small portion of dried sheep's flesh. Kings have given provinces to possess them, and their age is active as their youth. Thou, Nazarene, art the first, save a true believer, that ever had beneath his loins one of this noble race, a gift of the prophet himself to the blessed Ali, his kinsman and lieutenant, well called the Lion of God. Time lays his touch so lightly on these generous steeds, that the mare on which thou now sittest has seen five times five years pass over her, yet retains her pristine speed and vigour, only that in the career the support of a bridle, managed by a hand more experienced than thine, hath now become necessary. May the prophet be blessed, who hath bestowed on the true believers the means of advance and retreat, which causeth their iron-clothed enemies to be worn out with their own ponderous weight! How the horses of yonder dog Templars must have snorted and blown, when they had toiled fetlock-deep in the desert for one-twentieth part of the space which these brave steeds have left behind them, without one thick pant, or a drop of moisture upon their sleek and velvet coats!"

The Scottish knight, who had now begun to recover his breath and powers of attention, could not help acknowledging in his heart the advantage possessed by these Eastern warriors in a race of animals, alike proper for advance or retreat, and so admirably adapted to the level and sandy deserts of Arabia and Syria. But he did not choose to augment the pride of the Moslem by acquiescing in his proud claim of superiority, and therefore suffered the conversation to drop, and, looking around him, could now, at the more moderate pace at which they moved, distinguish that he was in a country not unknown to him.

The blighted borders and sullen waters of the Dead Sea, the ragged and precipitous chain of mountains arising on the left, the two or three palms clustered together, forming the single green speck on the bosom of the waste wilderness,—objects which, once seen, were scarcely to be forgotten,—showed to Sir Kenneth that they were approaching the fountain called the Diamond of the Desert, which had been the scene of his interview on a former occasion with the Saracen Emir Sheerkohf, or Ilderim. In a few minutes they checked their horses beside the spring, and the Hakim invited Sir Kenneth to descend from horseback, and repose himself as in a place of safety. They unbridled their steeds, El Hakim observing that farther care of them was unnecessary, since they would be speedily joined by some of the best-mounted among his slaves, who would do what farther was needful.

"Meantime," he said, spreading some food on the grass, "eat and drink, and be not discouraged. Fortune may raise up or abuse the ordinary mortal, but the sage and the soldier should have minds beyond her control."

The Scottish knight endeavoured to testify his thanks by showing himself docile; but though he strove to eat out of complaisance, the singular contrast between his present situation and that which he had

occupied on the same spot when the envoy of princes and the victor in combat, came like a cloud over his mind, and fasting, lassitude, and fatigue oppressed his bodily powers. El Hakim examined his hurried pulse, his red and inflamed eye, his heated hand, and his shortened respiration.

"The mind," he said, "grows wise by watching, but her sister the body, of coarser materials, needs the support of repose. Thou must sleep; and that thou mayst do so to refreshment, thou must take a draught mingled with this elixir." He drew from his bosom a small crystal vial, cased in silver filigree-work, and dropped into a little golden drinking-cup a small portion of a dark-coloured fluid.

"This," he said, is one of those productions which Allah hath sent on earth for a blessing, though man's weakness and wickedness have sometimes converted it into a curse. It is powerful as the wine-cup of the Nazarene to drop the curtain on the sleepless eye, and to relieve the burden of the overloaded bosom; but when applied to the purposes of indulgence and debauchery, it rends the nerves, destroys the strength, weakens the intellect, and undermines life. But fear not thou to use its virtues in the time of need, for the wise man warms him by the same firebrand with which the madman burneth the tent." *

"I have seen too much of thy skill, sage Hakim," said Sir Kenneth, "to debate thine hest;" and swallowed the narcotic, mingled as it was with some water from the spring, then wrapped him in the haick, or Arab cloak, which had been fastened to his saddle-pommel, and, according to the directions of the physician, stretched himself at ease in the shade to await the promised repose. Sleep came not at first, but in her stead a train of pleasing yet not rousing or awakening sensations. A state ensued, in which, still conscious of his own identity and his own condition, the knight felt enabled to consider them not only without alarm and sorrow, but as composedly as he might have viewed the story of his misfortunes acted upon a stage, or rather as a disembodied spirit might regard the transactions of its past existence. From this state of repose, amounting almost to apathy respecting the past, his thoughts were carried forward to the future, which, in spite of all that existed to overcloud the prospect, glittered with such hues, as under much happier auspices his unstimulated imagination had not been able to produce, even in its most exalted state. Liberty, fame, successful love, appeared to be the certain, and not very distant, prospect of the enslaved exile, the dishonoured knight, even of the despairing lover, who had placed his hopes of happiness so far beyond the prospect of chance, in her wildest possibilities, serving to countenance his wishes. Gradually, as the intellectual sight became overclouded, these gay visions became obscure, like the dying hues of sunset, until they were at last lost in total oblivion; and Sir Kenneth lay extended at the feet of El Hakim, to all appearance, but for his deep respiration, as inanimate a corpse as if life had actually departed.

* Some preparation of opium seems to be intimated.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"'Mid these wild scenes Enchantment waves her hand,
To change the face of the mysterious land;
Till the bewildering scenes around us seem
The vain productions of a feverish dream."

Astolpho, a Romance.

WHEN the Knight of the Leopard awoke from his long and profound repose, he found himself in circumstances so different from those in which he had lain down to sleep, that he doubted whether he was not still dreaming, or whether the scene had not been changed by magic. Instead of the damp grass, he lay on a couch of more than Oriental luxury, and some kind hands had, during his repose, stripped him of the cassock of chamois which he wore under his armour, and substituted a night dress of the finest linen, and a loose gown of silk. He had been canopied only by the palm-trees of the desert, but now he lay beneath a silken pavilion, which blazed with the richest colours of the Chinese loom, while a slight curtain of gauze, displayed around his couch, was calculated to protect his repose from the insects, to which he had, ever since his arrival in these climates, been a constant and passive prey. He looked around, as if to convince himself that he was actually awake, and all that fell beneath his eye partook of the splendour of his dormitory. A portable bath of cedar, lined with silver, was ready for use, and steamed with the odours which had been used in preparing it. On a small stand of ebony beside the couch stood a silver vase, containing sherbet of the most exquisite quality, cold as snow, and which the thirst that followed the use of the strong narcotic rendered peculiarly delicious. Still farther to dispel the dregs of intoxication which it had left behind, the knight resolved to use the bath, and experienced in doing so a delightful refreshment. Having dried

himself with napkins of the Indian wool, he would willingly have resumed his own coarse garments, that he might go forth to see whether the world was as much changed without as within the place of his repose. These, however, were nowhere to be seen, but in their place he found a Saracen dress of rich materials, with sabre and poniard, and all befitting an emir of distinction. He was able to suggest no motive to himself for this exuberance of care, excepting a suspicion that these attentions were intended to shake him in his religious profession; as indeed it was well known that the high esteem of the European knowledge and courage made the Soldan unbounded in his gifts to those who, having become his prisoners, had been induced to take the turban. Sir Kenneth, therefore, crossing himself devoutly, resolved to set all such snares at defiance; and that he might do so the more firmly, conscientiously determined to avail himself as moderately as possible of the attentions and luxuries thus liberally heaped upon him. Still, however, he felt his head oppressed and sleepy, and aware, too, that his undress was not fit for appearing abroad, he reclined upon the couch, and was again locked in the arms of slumber.

But this time his rest was not unbroken; for he was awakened by the voice of the physician at the door of the tent, enquiring after his health, and whether he had rested sufficiently. "May I enter your tent?" he concluded; "for the curtain is drawn before the entrance."

"The master," replied Sir Kenneth, determined to show that he was not surprised into forgetfulness of his own condition, "need demand no permission to enter the tent of the slave."

"But if I come not as a master?" said El Hakim, still without entering.

"The physician," answered the knight, "hath free access to the bedside of his patient."

"Neither come I now as a physician," replied El Hakim; "and therefore I still request permission, ere I come under the covering of thy tent."

"Whoever comes as a friend," said Sir Kenneth,—"and such thou hast hitherto shown thyself to me,—the habitation of the friend is ever open to him."

"Yet once again," said the Eastern sage, after the periphrastical manner of his countrymen, "supposing that I come not as a friend?"

"Come as thou wilt," said the Scottish knight, somewhat impatient of this circumlocution,—"be what thou wilt; thou knowest well it is neither in my power nor my inclination to refuse thee entrance."

"I come, then," said El Hakim, "as your ancient foe; but a fair and a generous one."

He entered as he spoke; and when he stood before the bedside of Sir Kenneth, the voice continued to be that of Adonbec the Arabian physician, but the form, dress, and features were those of Ilderim of Kurdistan, called Sheerkohf. Sir Kenneth gazed upon him, as if

he expected the vision to depart, like something created by his imagination.

"Doth it so surprise thee," said Ilderim, "and thou an approved warrior, to see that a soldier knows somewhat of the art of healing? I say to thee, Nazarene, that an accomplished cavalier should know how to dress his steed as well as how to ride him; how to forge his sword upon the stithy, as well as how to use it in battle; how to burnish his arms, as well as how to wear them; and, above all, how to cure wounds as well as how to inflict them."

As he spoke the Christian knight repeatedly shut his eyes, and while they remained closed, the idea of the Hakim, with his long flowing dark robes, high Tartar cap, and grave gestures, was present to his imagination; but so soon as he opened them, the graceful and richly-gemmed turban, the light hauberk of steel rings entwisted with silver, which glanced brilliantly as it obeyed every inflection of the body, the features freed from their formal expression, less swarthy, and no longer shadowed by the mass of hair (now limited to a well-trimmed beard), announced the soldier and not the sage.

"Art thou still so much surprised," said the Emir, "and hast thou walked in the world with such little observance, as to wonder that men are not always what they seem? Thou thyself—art thou what thou seemest?"

"No, by Saint Andrew!" exclaimed the knight; "for to the whole Christian camp I seem a traitor, and I know myself to be a true, though an erring man."

"Even so I judged thee," said Ilderim, "and as we had eaten salt together, I deemed myself bound to rescue thee from death and contumely. But wherefore lie you still on your couch, since the sun is high in the heavens? or are the vestments which my sumpter-camels have afforded unworthy of your wearing?"

"Not unworthy, surely, but unfitting for it," replied the Scot; "give me the dress of a slave, noble Ilderim, and I will don it with pleasure; but I cannot brook to wear the habit of the free Eastern warrior, with the turban of the Moslem."

"Nazarene," answered the Emir, "thy nation so easily entertain suspicion, that it may well render themselves suspected. Have I not told thee that Saladin desires no converts saving those whom the holy prophet shall dispose to submit themselves to his law? Violence and bribery are alike alien to his plan for extending the true faith. Hearken to me, my brother. When the blind man was miraculously restored to sight, the scales dropped from his eyes at the Divine pleasure—think'st thou that any earthly leech could have removed them? No. Such mediciner might have tormented the patient with his instruments, or perhaps soothed him with his balsams and cordials, but dark as he was must the darkened man have remained; and it is even so with the blindness of the understanding. If there be those

among the Franks who, for the sake of worldly lucre, have assumed the turban of the prophet, and followed the laws of Islam, with their own consciences

"'Doth it so surprise thee?' said Ilderim" (p. 234).

be the blame. Themselves sought out the bait—it was not flung to them by the Soldan. And when they shall hereafter be sentenced, as hypocrites, to the lowest gulf of hell, below Christian and Jew, magician and idolater,

and condemned to eat the fruit of the tree Yacoun, which is the heads of demons—to themselves, not to the Soldan, shall their guilt and their punishment be attributed. Wherefore wear, without doubt or scruple, the vesture prepared for you, since, if you proceed to the camp of Saladin, your own native dress will expose you to troublesome observation, and perhaps to insult."

"*If* I go to the camp of Saladin?" said Sir Kenneth, repeating the words of the Emir. "Alas! am I a free agent, and rather must I *not* go wherever your pleasure carries me?"

"Thine own will may guide thine own motions," said the Emir, "as freely as the wind which moveth the dust of the desert in what direction it chooseth. The noble enemy who met and well-nigh mastered my sword, cannot become my slave like him who has crouched beneath it. If wealth and power would tempt thee to join our people, I could ensure thy possessing them; but the man who refused the favours of the Soldan, when the axe was at his head, will not, I fear, now accept them, when I tell him he has his free choice."

"Complete your generosity, noble Emir," said Sir Kenneth, "by forbearing to show me a mode of requital, which conscience forbids me to comply with. Permit me rather to express, as bound in courtesy, my gratitude for this most chivalrous bounty, this undeserved generosity."

"Say not undeserved," replied the Emir Ilderim; "was it not through thy conversation, and thy account of the beauties which grace the court of the Melech Ric, that I ventured me thither in disguise, and thereby procured a sight the most blessed that I have ever enjoyed—that I ever shall enjoy, until the glories of Paradise beam on my eyes?"

"I understand you not," said Sir Kenneth, colouring alternately and turning pale, as one who felt that the conversation was taking a tone of the most painful delicacy.

"Not understand me!" exclaimed the Emir. "If the sight I saw in the tent of King Richard escaped thine observation, I will account it duller than the edge of a buffoon's wooden falchion. True, thou wert under sentence of death at the time; but, in my case, had my head been dropping from the trunk, the last strained glances of my eyeballs had distinguished with delight such a vision of loveliness, and the head would have rolled itself towards the incomparable houris, to kiss with its quivering lips the hem of their vestments. Yonder royalty of England, who for her superior loveliness deserves to be Queen of the universe—what tenderness in her blue eye, what lustre in her tresses of dishevelled gold! By the tomb of the prophet, I scarce think that the houri who shall present to me the diamond cup of immortality, will deserve so warm a caress!"

"Saracen," said Sir Kenneth, sternly, "thou speakest of the wife of Richard of England, of whom men think not and speak not as a woman to be won, but as a Queen to be revered."

"I cry you mercy," said the Saracen. "I had forgotten your superstitious veneration for the sex, which you consider rather fit to be wondered at and worshipped, than wooed and possessed. I warrant, since thou exactest such profound respect to yonder tender piece of frailty, whose every motion, step, and look bespeaks her very woman, less than absolute adoration must not be yielded to her of the dark tresses, and nobly speaking eye. *She*, indeed, I will allow, hath in her noble port and majestic mien something at once pure and firm—yet even she, when pressed by opportunity and a forward lover, would, I warrant thee, thank him in her heart rather for treating her as a mortal than as a goddess."

"Respect the kinswoman of Cœur de Lion!" said Sir Kenneth, in a tone of unrepressed anger.

"Respect her!" answered the Emir, in scorn; "by the Caaba, and if I do, it shall be rather as the bride of Saladin."

"The infidel Soldan is unworthy to salute even a spot that has been pressed by the foot of Edith Plantagenet!" exclaimed the Christian, springing from his couch.

"Ha! what said the Giaour?" exclaimed the Emir, laying his hand on his poniard hilt, while his forehead glowed like glancing copper, and the muscles of his lips and cheeks wrought till each curl of his beard seemed to twist and screw itself, as if alive with instinctive wrath. But the Scottish knight, who had stood the lion-anger of Richard, was unappalled at the tiger-like mood of the chafed Saracen.

"What I have said," continued Sir Kenneth, with folded arms and dauntless look, "I would, were my hands loose, maintain on foot or horseback against all mortals; and would hold it not the most memorable deed of my life to support it with my good broadsword against a score of these sickles and bodkins," pointing at the curved sabre and small poniard of the Emir.

The Saracen recovered his composure as the Christian spoke, so far as to withdraw his hand from his weapon, as if the motion had been without meaning; but still continued in deep ire.

"By the sword of the Prophet," he said, "which is the key both of Heaven and Hell, he little values his own life, brother, who uses the language thou dost! Believe me, that were thine hands loose, as thou term'st it, one single true believer would find them so much to do, that thou wouldst soon wish them fettered again in manacles of iron."

"Sooner would I wish them hewn off by the shoulder blades!" replied Sir Kenneth.

"Well. Thy hands are bound at present," said the Saracen, in a more amicable tone, "bound by thine own gentle sense of courtesy, nor have I any present purpose of setting them at liberty. We have proved each other's strength and courage ere now, and we may again meet in a fair field; and shame befall him who shall be the first to part from his

foeman! But now we are friends, and I look for aid from thee, rather than hard terms or defiances."

"We *are* friends," repeated the knight; and there was a pause, during which the fiery Saracen paced the tent, like the lion, who, after violent irritation, is said to take that method of cooling the distemperature of his blood, ere he stretches himself to repose in his den. The colder European remained unaltered in posture and aspect; yet he, doubtless, was also engaged in subduing the angry feelings, which had been so unexpectedly awakened.

"Let us reason of this calmly," said the Saracen; "I am a physician, as thou know'st, and it is written, that he who would have his wound cured, must not shrink when the leech probes and tents it. Seest thou, I am about to lay my finger on the sore. Thou lovest this kinswoman of the Melech Ric. Unfold the veil that shrouds thy thoughts —or unfold it not if thou wilt, for mine eyes see through its coverings."

"I *loved* her," answered Sir Kenneth, after a pause, "as a man loves Heaven's grace, and sued for her favour like a sinner for Heaven's pardon."

"And you love her no longer?" said the Saracen.

"Alas," answered Sir Kenneth, "I am no longer worthy to love her. I pray thee cease this discourse; thy words are poniards to me."

"Pardon me but a moment," continued Ilderim. "When thou, a poor and obscure soldier, didst so boldly and so highly fix thine affection, tell me, hadst thou good hope of its issue?"

"Love exists not without hope," replied the knight; "but mine was as nearly allied to despair, as that of the sailor swimming for his life, who, as he surmounts billow after billow, catches by intervals some gleam of the distant beacon, which shows him there is land in sight, though his sinking heart and wearied limbs assure him that he shall never reach it."

"And now," said Ilderim, "these hopes are sunk—that solitary light is quenched for ever?"

"For ever," answered Sir Kenneth, in the tone of an echo from the bosom of a ruined sepulchre.

"Methinks," said the Saracen, "if all thou lackest were some such distant meteoric glimpse of happiness as thou hadst formerly, thy beacon light might be rekindled, thy hope fished up from the ocean in which it has sunk, and thou thyself, good knight, restored to the exercise and amusement of nourishing thy fantastic passion upon a diet as unsubstantial as moonlight; for, if thou stood'st to-morrow fair in reputation as ever thou wert, she whom thou lovest will not be less the daughter of princes and the elected bride of Saladin."

"I would it so stood," said the Scot, "and if I did not——"

He stopped short, like a man who is afraid of boasting, under circumstances which did not permit his being put to the test. The Saracen smiled as he concluded the sentence.

"Thou wouldst challenge the Soldan to single combat?" said he.

"And if I did," said Sir Kenneth, haughtily, "Saladin's would neither be the first nor the best turban that I have couched lance at."

"Ay, but methinks the Soldan might regard it as too unequal a mode of perilling the chance of a royal bride, and the event of a great war," said the Emir.

"He may be met with in the front of battle," said the knight, his eyes gleaming with the ideas which such a thought inspired.

"He has been ever found there," said Ilderim; "nor is it his wont to turn his horse's head from any brave encounter. But it was not of the Soldan that I meant to speak. In a word, if it will content thee to be placed in such reputation as may be attained by detection of the thief who stole the Banner of England, I can put thee in a fair way of achieving this task—that is, if thou wilt be governed; for what says Lokman? If the child would walk, the nurse must lead him—if the ignorant would understand, the wise must instruct."

"And thou art wise, Ilderim," said the Scot, "wise though a Saracen, and generous though an infidel. I have witnessed that thou art both. Take, then, the guidance of this matter; and so thou ask nothing of me contrary to my loyalty and my Christian faith, I will obey thee punctually. Do what thou hast said, and take my life when it is accomplished."

"Listen thou to me, then," said the Saracen. "Thy noble hound is now recovered, by the blessing of that divine medicine which healeth man and beast, and by his sagacity shall those who assailed him be discovered."

"Ha!" said the knight, "methinks I comprehend thee. I was dull not to think of this!"

"But tell me," added the Emir, "hast thou any followers or retainers in the camp by whom the animal may be known?"

"I dismissed," said Sir Kenneth, "my old attendant, thy patient, with a varlet that waited on him, at the time when I expected to suffer death, giving him letters for my friends in Scotland; there are none others to whom the dog is familiar. But then my own person is well known—my very speech will betray me in a camp where I have played no mean part for many months."

"Both he and thou shall be disguised, so as to escape even close examination. I tell thee," said the Saracen, "that not thy brother in arms—not thy brother in blood—shalt discover thee, if thou be guided by my counsels. Thou hast seen me do matters more difficult; he that can call the dying from the darkness of the shadow of death, can easily cast a mist before the eyes of the living. But mark me! there is still the condition annexed to this service, that thou deliver a letter of Saladin to the niece of the Melech Ric, whose name is as difficult to our Eastern tongue and lips, as her beauty is delightful to our eyes."

Sir Kenneth paused before he answered, and the Saracen, observing

his hesitation, demanded of him "if he feared to undertake this message?"

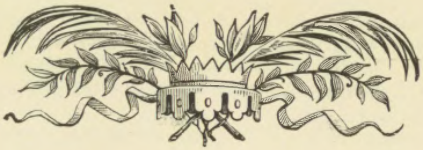
"Not if there were death in the execution," said Sir Kenneth; "I do but pause to consider whether it consists with my honour to bear the letter of the Soldan, or with that of the Lady Edith to receive it from a heathen prince."

"By the head of Mahommed, and by the honour of a soldier; by the tomb at Mecca, and by the soul of my father," said the Emir, "I swear to thee that the letter is written in all honour and respect. The song of the nightingale will sooner blight the rose-bower she loves, than will the words of the Soldan offend the ears of the lovely kinswoman of England."

"Then," said the knight, "I will bear the Soldan's letter faithfully, as if I were his born vassal; understanding, that beyond this simple act of service, which I will render with fidelity, from me of all men he can least expect mediation or advice in this his strange love-suit."

"Saladin is noble," answered the Emir, "and will not spur a generous horse to a leap which he cannot achieve. Come with me to my tent," he added, "and thou shalt be presently equipped with a disguise as unsearchable as midnight; so thou may'st walk the camp of the Nazarenes as if thou hadst on thy finger the signet of Giaougi." *

* Perhaps the same with Gyges.



A. DE RICHEMONT.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"A grain of dust
Soiling our cup, will make our sense reject
Fastidiously the draught which we did thirst for;
A rusted nail, placed near the faithful compass,
Will sway it from the truth, and wreck the argosy.
Even this small cause of anger and disgust
Will break the bonds of amity 'mongst princes,
And wreck their noblest purposes."

The Crusade.

THE reader can now have little doubt who the Ethiopian slave really was, with what purpose he had sought Richard's camp, and wherefore and with what hope he now stood close to the person of that monarch, as, surrounded by his valiant peers of England and Normandy, Cœur de Lion stood on the summit of St. George's Mount, with the Banner of England by his side, borne by the most goodly person in the army, being his own natural brother, William with the Long Sword, Earl of Salisbury, the offspring of Henry the Second's amour with the celebrated Rosamond of Woodstock.

From several expressions in the King's conversation with Neville on the preceding day, the Nubian was left in anxious doubt whether his disguise had not been penetrated, especially as that the King seemed to be aware in what manner the agency of the dog was expected to discover the thief who stole the banner, although the circumstance of such an animal's having been wounded on the occasion had been scarce mentioned in Richard's presence. Nevertheless, as the King continued to treat him in no other manner than his exterior required, the Nubian remained uncertain whether he was or was not discovered, and determined not to throw his disguise aside voluntarily.

Meanwhile, the powers of the various Crusading princes, arrayed under their royal and princely leaders, swept in long order around the base of the little mound; and as those of each different country passed by, their commanders advanced a step or two up the hill, and made a signal of courtesy to Richard and to the Standard of England, "in sign of regard and amity," as the protocol of the ceremony heedfully expressed it, "not of subjection or vassalage." The spiritual dignitaries, who in those days veiled not their bonnets to created being, bestowed on the King and his symbol of command their blessing instead of rendering obeisance.

Thus the long files marched on, and, diminished as they were by so many causes, appeared still an iron host, to whom the conquest of Palestine might seem an easy task. The soldiers, inspired by the consciousness of united strength, sat erect in their steel saddles, while it seemed that the trumpets sounded more cheerfully shrill, and the steeds, refreshed by rest and provender, chafed on the bit, and trod the ground more proudly. On they passed, troop after troop, banners waving, spears glancing, plumes dancing, in long perspective; a host composed of different nations, complexions, languages, arms and appearances, but all fired, for the time, with the holy yet romantic purpose of rescuing the distressed daughter of Zion from her thraldom, and redeeming the sacred earth, which more than mortal had trodden, from the yoke of the unbelieving Pagan. And it must be owned, that if, in other circumstances, the species of courtesy rendered to the King of England by so many warriors from whom he claimed no natural allegiance, had in it something that might have been thought humiliating, yet the nature and cause of the war was so fitted to his pre-eminently chivalrous character, and renowned feats in arms, that claims, which might elsewhere have been urged, were there forgotten; and the brave did willing homage to the bravest, in an expedition where the most undaunted and energetic courage was necessary to success.

The good King was seated on horseback about half way up the Mount, a morion on his head, surmounted by a crown, which left his manly features exposed to public view, as with cool and considerate eye he perused each rank as it passed him, and returned the salutation of the leaders. His tunic was of sky-coloured velvet, covered with plates of silver, and his hose of crimson silk, slashed with cloth of gold. By his side stood the seeming Ethiopian slave, holding the noble dog in a leash, such as was used in woodcraft. It was a circumstance which attracted no notice, for many of the princes of the Crusade had introduced black slaves into their household, in imitation of the barbarous splendour of the Saracens. Over the King's head streamed the large folds of the banner, and, as he looked to it from time to time, he seemed to regard a ceremony, indifferent to himself personally, as important, when considered as atoning an indignity offered to the kingdom which he ruled. In the background, and on the very summit

of the Mount, a wooden turret, erected for the occasion, held the Queen Berengaria and the principal ladies of the court. To this the King looked from time to time, and then ever and anon his eyes were turned on the Nubian and the dog, but only when such leaders approached, as, from circumstances of previous ill-will, he suspected of being accessory to the theft of the standard, or whom he judged capable of a crime so mean.

Thus, he did not look in that direction when Philip Augustus of France approached at the head of his splendid troops of Gallic chivalry; nay, he anticipated the motions of the French King, by descending the Mount as the latter came up the ascent, so that they met in the middle space, and blended their greetings so gracefully, that it appeared they met in fraternal equality. The sight of the two greatest princes in Europe, in rank at once and power, thus publicly avowing their concord, called forth bursts of thundering acclaim from the Crusading host at many miles' distance, and made the roving Arab scouts of the desert alarm the camp of Saladin with intelligence that the army of the Christians was in motion. Yet who but the King of kings can read the hearts of monarchs? Under this smooth show of courtesy, Richard nourished displeasure and suspicion against Philip, and Philip meditated withdrawing himself and his host from the army of the Cross, and leaving Richard to accomplish or fail in the enterprise with his own unassisted forces.

Richard's demeanour was different when the dark-armed knights and squires of the Temple chivalry approached; men with countenances bronzed to Asiatic blackness by the suns of Palestine, and the admirable state of whose horses and appointments far surpassed even that of the choicest troops of France and England. The King cast a hasty glance aside, but the Nubian stood quiet, and his trusty dog sat at his feet, watching, with a sagacious yet pleased look, the ranks which now passed before them. The King's look turned again on the chivalrous Templars, as the Grand Master, availing himself of his mingled character, bestowed his benediction on Richard as a priest, instead of doing him reverence as a military leader.

"The misproud and amphibious caitiff puts the monk upon me," said Richard to the Earl of Salisbury. "But, Longsword, we will let it pass. A punctilio must not lose Christendom the services of these experienced lances, because their victories have rendered them overweening. Lo you, here comes our valiant adversary, the Duke of Austria—mark his manner and bearing, Longsword—and thou, Nubian, let the hound have full view of him. By heaven, he brings his buffoons along with him!"

In fact, whether from habit, or, which is more likely, to intimate contempt of the ceremonial he was about to comply with, Leopold was attended by his *spruch-sprecher* and his jester, and, as he advanced towards Richard, he whistled in what he wished to be considered as an

indifferent manner, though his heavy features evinced the sullenness, mixed with the fear, with which a truant schoolboy may be seen to approach his master. As the reluctant dignitary made, with discomposed and sulky look, the obeisance required, the *spruch-sprecher* shook his baton, and proclaimed, like a herald, that, in what he was now doing, the Archduke of Austria was not to be held derogating from the rank and privileges of a sovereign prince; to which the jester answered with a sonorous *amen*, which provoked much laughter among the bystanders.

King Richard looked more than once at the Nubian and his dog; but the former moved not, nor did the latter strain at the leash, so that Richard said to the slave with some scorn, "Thy success in this enterprise, my sable friend, even though thou hast brought thy hound's sagacity to back thine own, will not, I fear, place thee high in the rank of wizards, or much augment thy merits towards our person."

The Nubian answered, as usual, only by a lowly obeisance.

Meantime the troops of the Marquis of Montserrat next passed in order before the King of England. That powerful and wily baron, to make the greater display of his forces, had divided them into two bodies. At the head of the first, consisting of his vassals and followers, and levied from his Syrian possessions, came his brother Enguerrand, and he himself followed leading on a gallant band of twelve hundred Stradiots, a kind of light cavalry raised by the Venetians in their Dalmatian possessions, and of which they had intrusted the command to the Marquis, with whom the republic had many bonds of connection. These Stradiots were clothed in a fashion partly European, but partaking chiefly of the Eastern fashion. They wore, indeed, short hauberks, but had over them parti-coloured tunics of rich stuffs, with large wide pantaloons and half-boots. On their heads were straight upright caps, similar to those of the Greeks, and they carried small round targets; bows and arrows, scimitars, and poniards. They were mounted on horses, carefully selected, and well maintained at the expense of the State of Venice; their saddles and appointments resembled those of the Turks, and they rode in the same manner, with short stirrups and upon a high seat. These troops were of great use in skirmishing with the Arabs, though unable to engage in close combat, like the iron-sheathed men-at-arms of Western and Northern Europe.

Before this goodly band came Conrade, in the same garb with the Stradiots, but of such rich stuff that he seemed to blaze with gold and silver, and the milk-white plume fastened in his cap by a clasp of diamonds, seemed tall enough to sweep the clouds. The noble steed which he reined bounded and caracoled, and displayed his spirit and agility in a manner which might have troubled a less admirable horseman than the Marquis, who gracefully ruled him with the one hand, while the other displayed the baton, whose predominancy over the ranks which he led seemed equally absolute. Yet his authority over the Stradiots was

more in show than in substance; for there paced beside him, on an ambling palfrey of soberest mood, a little old man, dressed entirely in black, without beard or mus-

"The Grand Master bestowed his benediction on Richard" (p. 243).

taches, and having an appearance altogether mean and insignificant, when compared with the blaze of splendour around him. But this mean-looking old man was one of those deputies whom the Venetian government sent into camps to overlook the conduct of the generals to whom the leading was consigned, and to maintain

that jealous system of espial and control which had long distinguished the policy of the republic.

Conrade, who, by cultivating Richard's humour, had attained a certain degree of favour with him, no sooner was come within his ken than the King of England descended a step or two to meet him, exclaiming, at the same time, "Ha, Lord Marquis, thou at the head of the fleet Stradiots, and thy black shadow attending thee as usual, whether the sun shines or not! May not one ask thee whether the rule of the troops remains with the shadow or the substance?"

Conrade was commencing his reply with a smile, when Roswal, the noble hound, uttering a furious and savage yell, sprang forward. The Nubian, at the same time, slipped the leash, and the hound, rushing on, leapt upon Conrade's noble charger, and seizing the Marquis by the throat, pulled him down from the saddle. The plumed rider lay rolling on the sand, and the frightened horse fled in wild career through the camp.

"Thy hound hath pulled down the right quarry, I warrant him," said the King to the Nubian, "and I vow to Saint George he is a stag of ten tynes! Pluck the dog off, lest he throttle him."

The Ethiopian, accordingly, though not without difficulty, disengaged the dog from Conrade, and fastened him up, still highly excited, and struggling in the leash. Meanwhile many crowded to the spot, especially followers of Conrade, and officers of the Stradiots, who, as they saw their leader lie gazing wildly on the sky, raised him up amid a tumultuary cry of—"Cut the slave and his hound to pieces!"

But the voice of Richard, loud and sonorous, was heard clear above all other exclamations—"He dies the death who injures the hound! He hath but done his duty, after the sagacity with which God and nature have endowed the brave animal. Stand forward for a false traitor, thou Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat! I impeach thee of treason."

Several of the Syrian leaders had now come up, and Conrade, vexation, and shame, and confusion struggling with passion in his manner and voice, exclaimed, "What means this? With what am I charged? Why this base usage, and these reproachful terms? Is this the league of concord which England renewed but so lately?"

"Are the Princes of the Crusade turned hares or deer in the eyes of King Richard, that he should slip hounds on them?" said the sepulchral voice of the Grand Master of the Templars.

"It must be some singular accident—some fatal mistake," said Philip of France, who rode up at the same moment.

"Some deceit of the Enemy," said the Archbishop of Tyre.

"A stratagem of the Saracens," cried Henry of Champagne. "It were well to hang up the dog, and put the slave to the torture."

"Let no man lay hand upon them," said Richard, "as he loves his own life! Conrade, stand forth, if thou darest, and deny the accusation

which this mute animal hath in his noble instinct brought against thee, of injury done to him, and foul scorn to England?"

"I never touched the banner," said Conrade, hastily.

"Thy words betray thee, Conrade!" said Richard; "for how didst thou know, save from conscious guilt, that the question is concerning the banner?"

"Hast thou then not kept the camp in turmoil on that and no other score?" answered Conrade; "and dost thou impute to a prince and an ally a crime, which, after all, was probably committed by some paltry felon for the sake of the gold thread? Or wouldst thou now impeach a confederate on the credit of a dog?"

By this time the alarm was becoming general, so that Philip of France interposed.

"Princes and nobles," he said, "you speak in presence of those whose swords will soon be at the throats of each other, if they hear their leaders at such terms together. In the name of Heaven, let us draw off, each his own troops, into their separate quarters, and ourselves meet an hour hence in the Pavilion of Council, to take some order in this new state of confusion."

"Content," said King Richard, "though I should have liked to have interrogated that caitiff while his gay doublet was yet besmirched with sand. But the pleasure of France shall be ours in this matter."

The leaders separated as was proposed, each prince placing himself at the head of his own forces; and then was heard on all sides the crying of war cries, and the sounding of gathering-notes upon bugles and trumpets, by which the different stragglers were summoned to their prince's banner; and the troops were shortly seen in motion, each taking different routes through the camp to their own quarters. But although any immediate act of violence was thus prevented, yet the accident which had taken place dwelt on every mind; and those foreigners, who had that morning hailed Richard as the worthiest to lead their army, now resumed their prejudices against his pride and intolerance, while the English, conceiving the honour of their country connected with the quarrel, of which various reports had gone about, considered the natives of other countries jealous of the fame of England and her King, and disposed to undermine it by the meanest arts of intrigue. Many and various were the rumours spread upon the occasion, and there was one which averred that the Queen and her ladies had been much alarmed by the tumult, and that one of them had swooned.

The Council assembled at the appointed hour. Conrade had in the meanwhile laid aside his dishonoured dress, and with it the shame and confusion which, in spite of his talents and promptitude, had at first overwhelmed him, owing to the strangeness of the accident and suddenness of the accusation. He was now robed like a prince, and entered the council-chamber attended by the Archduke of Austria, the

Grand Masters both of the Temple and of the Order of Saint John, and several other potentates, who made a show of supporting him and defending his cause, chiefly perhaps from political motives, or because they themselves nourished a personal enmity against Richard.

This appearance of union in favour of Conrade was far from influencing the King of England. He entered the Council with his usual indifference of manner, and in the same dress in which he had just alighted from horseback. He cast a careless and somewhat scornful glance on the leaders, who had with studied affectation arranged themselves around Conrade, as if owning his cause, and in the most direct terms charged Conrade of Montserrat with having stolen the Banner of England, and wounded the faithful animal who stood in its defence.

Conrade rose boldly to answer, and in despite, as he expressed himself, of man and brute, king or dog, avouched his innocence of the crime charged.

"Brother of England," said Philip, who willingly assumed the character of moderator of the assembly, "this is an unusual impeachment. We do not hear you avouch your own knowledge of this matter, farther than your belief resting upon the demeanour of this hound towards the Marquis of Montserrat. Surely the word of a knight and a prince should bear him out against the barking of a cur?"

"Royal brother," returned Richard, "recollect that the Almighty, who gave the dog to be companion of our pleasures and our toils, hath invested him with a nature noble and incapable of deceit. He forgets neither friend nor foe; remembers, and with accuracy, both benefit and injury. He hath a share of man's intelligence, but no share of man's falsehood. You may bribe a soldier to slay a man with his sword, or a witness to take life by false accusation; but you cannot make a hound tear his benefactor; he is the friend of man, save when man justly incurs his enmity. Dress yonder Marquis in what peacock-robes you will—disguise his appearance—alter his complexion with drugs and washes—hide him amidst a hundred men—I will yet pawn my sceptre that the hound detects him, and expresses his resentment, as you have this day beheld. This is no new incident, although a strange one. Murderers and robbers have been, ere now, convicted, and suffered death, under such evidence, and men have said that the finger of God was in it. In thine own land, royal brother, and upon such an occasion, the matter was tried by a solemn duel betwixt the man and the dog, as appellant and defendant in a challenge of murder. The dog was victorious, the man was punished, and the crime was confessed. Credit me, royal brother, that hidden crimes have often been brought to light by the testimony even of inanimate substances, not to mention animals far inferior in instinctive sagacity to the dog, who is the friend and companion of our race."

"Such a duel there hath indeed been, royal brother," answered

Philip, "and that in the reign of one of our predecessors, to whom God be gracious. But it was in the olden time, nor can we hold it a precedent fitting for this occasion. The defendant in that case was a private gentleman, of small rank or respect; his offensive weapons were only a club, his defensive a leathern jerkin. But we cannot degrade a prince to the disgrace of using such rude arms, or to the ignominy of such a combat."

"I never meant that you should," said King Richard; "it were foul play to hazard the good hound's life against that of such a double-faced traitor as this Conrade hath proved himself. But there lies our own glove; we appeal him to the combat in respect of the evidence we brought forth against him. A king, at least, is more than the mate of a marquis."

Conrade made no hasty effort to seize on the pledge which Richard cast into the middle of the assembly, and King Philip had time to reply, ere the Marquis made a movement to lift the glove.

"A king," said he of France, "is as much more than a match for the Marquis Conrade, as a dog would be less. Royal Richard, this cannot be permitted. You are the leader of our expedition, the sword and buckler of Christendom."

"I protest against such a combat," said the Venetian proveditore, "until the King of England shall have repaid the fifty thousand bezants which he is indebted to the republic. It is enough to be threatened with loss of our debt, should our debtor fall by the hands of the pagans, without the additional risk of his being slain in brawls amongst Christians, concerning dogs and banners."

"And I," said William with the Long Sword, Earl of Salisbury, "protest in my turn against my royal brother perilling his life, which is the property of the people of England, in such a cause. Here, noble brother, receive back your glove, and think only as if the wind had blown it from your hand. Mine shall lie in its stead. A king's son, though with the bar sinister on his shield, is at least a match for this marmoset of a marquis."

"Princes and nobles," said Conrade, "I will not accept of King Richard's defiance. He hath been chosen our leader against the Saracens, and if *his* conscience can answer the accusation of provoking an ally to the field on a quarrel so frivolous, *mine*, at least, cannot endure the reproach of accepting it. But touching his bastard brother, William of Woodstock, or against any other who shall adopt, or shall dare to stand godfather to this most false charge, I will defend my honour in the lists, and prove whosoever impeaches it a false liar."

"The Marquis of Montserrat," said the Archbishop of Tyre, "hath spoken like a wise and moderate gentleman; and methinks this controversy might, without dishonour to any party, end at this point."

"Methinks it might so terminate," said the King of France,

"provided King Richard will recall his accusation, as made upon over slight grounds."

"Philip of France," answered Cœur de Lion, "my words shall never do my thoughts so much injury. I have charged yonder Conrade as a thief, who, under cloud of night, stole from its place the emblem of England's dignity. I still believe and charge him to be such; and when a day is appointed for the combat, doubt not that, since Conrade declines to meet us in person, I will find a champion to appear in support of my challenge; for thou, William, must not thrust thy long sword into this quarrel without our special license."

"Since my rank makes me arbiter in this most unhappy matter," said Philip of France, "I appoint the fifth day from hence for the decision thereof, by way of combat, according to knightly usage—Richard, King of England, to appear by his champion as appellant, and Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat, in his own person, as defendant. Yet I own, I know not where to find neutral ground where such a quarrel may be fought out; for it must not be in the neighbourhood of this camp, where the soldiers would make faction on the different sides."

"It were well," said Richard, "to apply to the generosity of the royal Saladin, since, heathen as he is, I have never known knight more fulfilled of nobleness, or to whose good faith we may so peremptorily intrust ourselves. I speak thus for those who may be doubtful of mishap—for myself, wherever I see my foe, I make that spot my battle-ground."

"Be it so," said Philip; "we will make this matter known to Saladin, although it be showing to an enemy the unhappy spirit of discord which we would willingly hide from even ourselves, were it possible. Meanwhile, I dismiss this assembly, and charge you all, as Christian men and noble knights, that ye let this unhappy feud breed no farther brawling in the camp, but regard it as a thing solemnly referred to the judgment of God, to whom each of you should pray that he will dispose of victory in the combat according to the truth of the quarrel; and therewith may His will be done!"

"Amen, amen!" was answered on all sides; while the Templar whispered the Marquis, "Conrade, wilt thou not add a petition to be delivered from the power of the dog, as the Psalmist hath it?"

"Peace, thou——!" replied the Marquis; "there is a revealing demon abroad, which may report, amongst other tidings, how far thou dost carry the motto of thy order—*Feriatur Leo.*"

"Thou wilt stand the brunt of challenge?" said the Templar.

"Doubt me not," said Conrade. "I would not, indeed, have willingly met the iron arm of Richard himself, and I shame not to confess that I rejoice to be free of his encounter. But, from his bastard brother downward, the man breathes not in his ranks whom I fear to meet."

'It is well you are so confident," continued the Templar; "and in

that case, the fangs of yonder hound have done more to dissolve this league of princes than either thy devices or the dagger of the Charegite. Seest thou how, under a brow studiously overclouded, Philip cannot conceal the satisfaction which he feels at the prospect of release from the alliance which sat so heavy on him? Mark how Henry of Champagne smiles to himself, like a sparkling goblet of his own wine; and see the chuckling delight of Austria, who thinks his quarrel is about to be avenged, without risk or trouble of his own. Hush, he approaches.—A most grievous chance, most royal Austria, that these breaches in the walls of our Zion——"

"If thou meanest this Crusade," replied the Duke, "I would it were crumbled to pieces, and each were safe at home! I speak this in confidence."

"But," said the Marquis of Montserrat, "to think this disunion should be made by the hands of King Richard, for whose pleasure we have been contented to endure so much, and to whom we have been as submissive as slaves to a master, in hopes that he would use his valour against our enemies, instead of exercising it upon our friends!"

"I see not that he is so much more valorous than others," said the Archduke. "I believe, had the noble Marquis met him in the lists, he would have had the better; for, though the islander deals heavy blows with the pole-axe, he is not so very dexterous with the lance. I should have cared little to have met him myself on our old quarrel, had the weal of Christendom permitted to sovereign princes to breathe themselves in the lists. And if thou desirest it, noble Marquis, I will myself be your godfather in this combat."

"And I also," said the Grand Master.

"Come, then, and take your nooning in our tent, noble sirs," said the Duke, "and we'll speak of this business over some right *nierenstein*."

They entered together accordingly.

"What said our patron and these great folks together?" said Jonas Schwanker to his companion, the *spruch-sprecher*, who had used the freedom to press nigh to his master when the council was dismissed, while the jester waited at a more respectful distance.

"Servant of Folly," said the *spruch-sprecher*, "moderate thy curiosity; it beseems not that I should tell to thee the counsels of our master."

"Man of wisdom, you mistake," answered Jonas; "we are both the constant attendants on our patron, and it concerns us alike to know whether thou or I, Wisdom or Folly, have the deeper interest in him."

"He told to the Marquis," answered the *spruch-sprecher*, "and to the Grand Master, that he was aweary of these wars, and would be glad he was safe at home."

"That is a drawn cast, and counts for nothing in the game," said the jester; "it was most wise to think thus, but great folly to tell it to others;—proceed."

"Ha, hem!" said the *spruch-sprecher*; "he next said to them. that Richard was not more valorous than others, or over dexterous in the tilt-yard."

"Woodcock of my side," said Schwanker; "this was egregious folly. What next?"

"Nay, I am something oblivious," replied the man of wisdom—"he invited them to a goblet of *nierenstein*.

"That hath a show of wisdom in it," said Jonas; "thou may'st mark it to thy credit in the meantime; but an he drink too much, as is most likely, I will have it pass to mine. Anything more?"

"Nothing worth memory," answered the orator, "only he wished he had taken the occasion to meet Richard in the lists."

"Out upon it—out upon it!" said Jonas; "this is such dotage of folly that I am well-nigh ashamed of winning the game by it. Ne'ertheless, fool as he is, we will follow him, most sage *spruch-sprecher*, and have our share of the wine of *nierenstein*."

CHAPTER XXV.

"Yet this inconstancy is such
As thou, too, shalt adore;
I could not love thee, love, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

MONTROSE'S *Lines.*

WHEN King Richard returned to his tent, he commanded the Nubian to be brought before him. He entered with his usual ceremonial reverence, and, having prostrated himself, remained standing before the King, in the attitude of a slave awaiting the orders of his master. It was perhaps well for him that the preservation of his character required his eyes to be fixed on the ground, since the keen glance with which Richard for some time surveyed him in silence would, if fully encountered, have been difficult to sustain.

"Thou canst well of wood-craft," said the King, after a pause, "and hast started thy game and brought him to bay as ably as if Tristrem himself had taught thee.* But this is not all—he must be brought down at force. I myself would have liked to have levelled my hunting-spear at him. There are, it seems, respects which prevent this. Thou art about to return to the camp of the Soldan, bearing a letter, requiring of his courtesy to appoint neutral ground for the deed of chivalry, and, should it consist with his pleasure, to concur with us in witnessing it. Now, speaking conjecturally, we think thou might'st

* An universal tradition ascribed to Sir Tristrem, famous for his love of the fair Queen Yseult, the laws concerning the practice of wood-craft, or *venerie*, as it was called, being those that related to the rules of the chase, which were deemed of much consequence during the Middle Ages.

find in that camp some cavalier who, for the love of truth, and his own augmentation of honour, will do battle with this same traitor of Montserrat?"

The Nubian raised his eyes and fixed them on the King with a look of eager ardour; then raised them to Heaven with such solemn gratitude, that the water soon glistened in them, then bent his head, as affirming what Richard desired, and resumed his usual posture of submissive attention.

"It is well," said the King; "and I see thy desire to oblige me in this matter. And herein, I must needs say, lies the excellence of such a servant as thou, who hast not speech either to debate our purpose, or to require explanation of what we have determined. An English serving-man, in thy place, had given me his dogged advice to trust the combat with some good lance of my household, who, from my brother Longsword downwards, are all on fire to do battle in my cause; and a chattering Frenchman had made a thousand attempts to discover wherefore I look for a champion from the camp of the infidels. But thou, my silent agent, canst do mine errand without questioning or comprehending it; with thee, to hear is to obey."

A bend of the body, and a genuflection, were the appropriate answer of the Ethiopian to these observations.

"And now to another point," said the King, and speaking suddenly and rapidly. "Have you yet seen Edith Plantagenet?"

The mute looked up as in the act of being about to speak,—nay, his lips had begun to utter a distinct negative,—when the abortive attempt died away in the imperfect murmurs of the dumb.

"Why, lo you there!" said the King. "The very sound of the name of a royal maiden, of beauty so surpassing as that of our lovely cousin, seems to have power enough well-nigh to make the dumb speak. What miracles then might her eye work upon such a subject! I will make the experiment, friend slave. Thou shalt see this choice beauty of our court, and do the errand of the princely Soldan."

Again a joyful glance—again a genuflection—but, as he arose, the King laid his hand heavily on his shoulder, and proceeded with stern gravity thus. "Let me in one thing warn you, my sable envoy. Even if thou shouldst feel that the kindly influence of her, whom thou art soon to behold, should loosen the bonds of thy tongue, presently imprisoned, as the good Soldan expresses it, within the ivory wall of its castle, beware how thou changest thy taciturn character, or speakest a word in her presence, even if thy powers of utterance were to be miraculously restored. Believe me that I should have thy tongue extracted by the roots, and its ivory palace, that is, I presume, its range of teeth, drawn out one by one. Wherefore, be wise and silent still."

The Nubian, so soon as the King had removed his heavy grasp from his shoulder, bent his head, and laid his hand on his lips, in token of silent obedience.

But Richard again laid his hand on him more gently, and added, "This behest we lay on thee as on a slave. Wert thou knight and gentleman, we would require thine honour in pledge of thy silence, which is one especial condition of our present trust."

The Ethiopian raised his body proudly, looked full at the King, and laid his right hand on his heart.

Richard then summoned his chamberlain.

"Go, Neville," he said, "with this slave, to the tent of our royal consort, and say it is our pleasure that he have an audience—a private audience—of our cousin Edith. He is charged with a commission to her. Thou canst show him the way also, in case he requires thy guidance, though thou may'st have observed it is wonderful how familiar he already seems to be with the purlieus of our camp. And thou, too, friend Ethiop," the King continued, "what thou dost, do quickly, and return hither within the half-hour."

"I stand discovered," thought the seeming Nubian, as, with downcast looks and folded arms, he followed the hasty stride of Neville towards the tent of Queen Berengaria. "I stand undoubtedly discovered and unfolded to King Richard; yet I cannot perceive that his resentment is hot against me. If I understand his words—and surely it is impossible to misinterpret them—he gives me a noble chance of redeeming my honour upon the crest of this false Marquis, whose guilt I read in his craven eye and quivering lip, when the charge was made against him. Roswal, faithfully hast thou served thy master, and most dearly shall thy wrong be avenged! But what is the meaning of my present permission to look upon her whom I had despaired ever to see again? And why, or how, can the royal Plantagenet consent that I should see his divine kinswoman, either as the messenger of the heathen Saladin, or as the guilty exile whom he so lately expelled from his camp—his audacious avowal of the affection which is his pride being the greatest enhancement of his guilt? That Richard should consent to her receiving a letter from an infidel lover, by the hands of one of such disproportioned rank, are either of them circumstances equally incredible, and, at the same time, inconsistent with each other. But Richard, when unmoved by his heady passions, is liberal, generous, and truly noble, and as such I will deal with him, and act according to his instructions, direct or implied, seeking to know no more than may gradually unfold itself without my officious enquiry. To him who has given me so brave an opportunity to vindicate my tarnished honour, I owe acquiescence and obedience, and, painful as it may be, the debt shall be paid. And yet,"—thus the proud swelling of his heart further suggested,—"Cœur de Lion, as he is called, might have measured the feelings of others by his own. I urge an address to his kinswoman! *I*, who never spoke word to her when I took a royal prize from her hand—when I was accounted not the lowest in feats of chivalry among the

defenders of the Cross! *I* approach her when in a base disguise, and in a servile habit—and, alas! when my actual condition is that of a slave, with a spot of dishonour on that which was once my shield! *I* do this! He little knows me. Yet I thank him for the opportunity which may make us all the better acquainted with each other."

As he arrived at this conclusion, they paused before the entrance of the Queen's pavilion.

They were of course admitted by the guards, and Neville, leaving the Nubian in a small apartment, or antechamber, which was but too well remembered by him, passed into that which was used as the Queen's presence-chamber. He communicated his royal master's pleasure in a low and respectful tone of voice, very different from the bluntness of Thomas de Vaux, to whom Richard was everything, and the rest of the court, including Berengaria herself, was nothing. A burst of laughter followed the communication of his errand.

"And what like is the Nubian slave, who comes ambassador on such an errand from the Soldan?—a negro, De Neville, is he not?" said a female voice, easily recognised for that of Berengaria. "A negro, is he not, De Neville, with black skin, a head curled like a ram's, a flat nose, and blubber lips—ha, worthy Sir Henry?"

"Let not your Grace forget the shin-bones," said another voice, "bent outwards like the edge of a Saracen scimitar."

"Rather like the bow of a Cupid, since he comes upon a lover's errand," said the Queen. "Gentle Neville, thou art ever prompt to pleasure us poor women, who have so little to pass away our idle moments. We must see this messenger of love. Turks and Moors have I seen many, but negro never."

"I am created to obey your Grace's commands, so you will bear me out with my sovereign for doing so," answered the debonair knight. "Yet, let me assure your Grace, you will see somewhat different from what you expect."

"So much the better—uglier yet than our imaginations can fancy, yet the chosen love-messenger of this gallant Soldan!"

"Gracious madam," said the Lady Calista, "may I implore you would permit the good knight to carry this messenger straight to the Lady Edith, to whom his credentials are addressed? We have already escaped hardly for such a frolic."

"Escaped?" repeated the Queen, scornfully. "Yet thou mayst be right, Calista, in thy caution; let this Nubian, as thou callest him, first do his errand to our cousin. Besides, he is mute too, is he not?"

"He is, gracious madam," answered the knight.

"Royal sport have these Eastern ladies," said Berengaria, "attended by those before whom they may say anything, yet who can report nothing. Whereas in our camp, as the Prelate of St. Jude's is wont to say, a bird of the air will carry the matter."

"Because," said De Neville, "your Grace forgets that you speak within canvas walls."

The voices sank on this observation, and after a little whispering, the English knight again returned to the Ethiopian, and made him a sign to follow. He did so, and

"'Is it indeed you, brave Knight of the Leopard?'" (p. 258).

Neville conducted him to a pavilion, pitched somewhat apart from that of the Queen, for the accommodation, it seemed, of the Lady Edith and her attendants. One of her Coptic maidens received the message communicated by Sir Henry Neville, and, in the space of a very few minutes, the Nubian was ushered into Edith's presence, while Neville was left on the outside of the tent. The slave who introduced him withdrew on a signal from her mistress, and it was with humiliation, not of the posture only, but of the very inmost soul, that the unfortunate knight, thus strangely disguised, threw himself on one knee, with looks bent on the ground, and arms folded on his bosom, like a criminal who expects his doom. Edith was clad in the same manner as when she received King Richard, her long transparent dark veil hanging around her like the shade of a summer night on a beautiful landscape, disguising and rendering obscure the beauties which it could not hide. She held in her hand a silver lamp, fed with some aromatic spirit, which burned with unusual brightness.

When Edith came within a step of the kneeling and motionless slave, she held the light towards his face, as if to peruse his features more attentively, then turned from him, and placed her lamp so as to throw the shadow of his face in profile upon the curtain which hung beside. She at length spoke in a voice composed, yet deeply sorrowful.

"Is it you? Is it indeed you, brave Knight of the Leopard—gallant Sir Kenneth of Scotland—is it indeed you?—thus servilely disguised—thus surrounded by an hundred dangers?"

At hearing the tones of his lady's voice thus unexpectedly addressed to him, and in a tone of compassion approaching to tenderness, a corresponding reply rushed to the knight's lips, and scarce could Richard's commands, and his own promised silence, prevent his answering, that the sight he saw, the sounds he just heard, were sufficient to recompense the slavery of a life, and dangers which threatened that life every hour. He *did* recollect himself, however, and a deep and impassioned sigh was his only reply to the high-born Edith's question.

"I see—I know I have guessed right," continued Edith. "I marked you from your first appearance near the platform on which I stood with the Queen. I knew, too, your valiant hound. She is no true lady, and is unworthy of the service of such a knight as thou art, from whom disguises of dress or hue could conceal a faithful servant. Speak, then, without fear, to Edith Plantagenet. She knows how to grace in adversity the good knight who served, honoured, and did deeds of arms in her name, when fortune befriended him. Still silent! Is it fear or shame that keeps thee so? Fear should be unknown to thee; and for shame, let it remain with those who have wronged thee."

The knight, in despair at being obliged to play the mute in an interview so interesting, could only express his mortification by sighing deeply, and laying his finger upon his lips. Edith stepped back, as if somewhat displeased.

"What!" she said, "the Asiatic mute in very deed, as well as in attire? This I looked not for. Or thou may'st scorn me, perhaps, for thus boldly acknowledging that I have heedfully observed the homage thou hast paid me? Hold no unworthy thoughts of Edith on that account. She knows well the bounds which reserve and modesty prescribe to high-born maidens, and she knows when and how far they should give place to gratitude—to a sincere desire that it were in her power to repay services and repair injuries, arising from the devotion which a good knight bore towards her. Why fold thy hands together, and wring them with so much passion? Can it be," she added, shrinking back at the idea, "that their cruelty has actually deprived thee of speech? Thou shakest thy head. Be it a spell—be it obstinacy, I question thee no farther, but leave thee to do thine errand after thine own fashion. I also can be mute."

The disguised knight made an action as if at once lamenting his own condition, and deprecating her displeasure, while at the same time he presented to her, wrapped, as usual, in fine silk and cloth of gold, the letter of the Soldan. She took it, surveyed it carelessly, then laid it aside, and bending her eyes once more on the knight, she said in a low tone, "Not even a word to do thine errand to me?"

He pressed both his hands to his brow as if to intimate the pain which he felt at being unable to obey her; but she turned from him in anger.

"Begone!" she said. "I have spoken enough—too much—to one who will not waste on me a word in reply. Begone!—and say, if I have wronged thee, I have done penance; for if I have been the unhappy means of dragging thee down from a station of honour, I have, in this interview, forgotten my own worth, and lowered myself in thy eyes and in my own."

She covered her eyes with her hand, and seemed deeply agitated. Sir Kenneth would have approached, but she waved him back.

"Stand off! thou whose soul Heaven hath suited to its new station! Aught less dull and fearful than a slavish mute had spoken a word of gratitude, were it but to reconcile me to my own degradation. Why pause you?—begone!"

The disguised knight almost involuntarily looked towards the letter as an apology for protracting his stay. She snatched it up, saying, in a tone of irony and contempt, "I had forgotten; the dutiful slave waits an answer to his message. How's this—from the Soldan!"

She hastily ran over the contents, which were expressed both in Arabic and French, and when she had done, she laughed in bitter anger.

"Now this passes imagination!" she said; "no jongleur can show so deft a transmutation! His legerdemain can transform zechins and bezants into doits and maravedies; but can his art convert a Christian knight, ever esteemed among the bravest of the Holy Crusade, into the

dust-kissing slave of a heathen Soldan—the bearer of a Paynim's insolent proposals to a Christian maiden; nay, forgetting the laws of honourable chivalry, as well as of religion? But it avails not talking to the willing slave of a heathen hound. Tell your master, when his scourge shall have found thee a tongue, that which thou hast seen me do." So saying, she threw the Soldan's letter on the ground, and placed her foot upon it. "And say to him, that Edith Plantagenet scorns the homage of an unchristened Pagan."

With these words she was about to shoot from the knight, when kneeling at her feet in bitter agony, he ventured to lay his hand upon her robe, and oppose her departure.

"Heardst thou not what I said, dull slave?" she said, turning short round on him, and speaking with emphasis; "tell the heathen Soldan, thy master, that I scorn his suit as much as I despise the prostration of a worthless renegade to religion and chivalry—to God and to his lady!"

So saying, she burst from him, tore her garment from his grasp, and left the tent.

The voice of Neville, at the same time, summoned him from without. Exhausted and stupefied by the distress he had undergone during this interview, from which he could only have extricated himself by breach of the engagement which he had formed with King Richard, the unfortunate knight staggered rather than walked after the English baron, till they reached the royal pavilion, before which a party of horsemen had just dismounted. There was light and motion within the tent, and when Neville entered with his disguised attendant, they found the King, with several of his nobility, engaged in welcoming those who were newly arrived.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"'The tears I shed must ever fall!
I weep not for an absent swain,
For time may happier hours recall,
And parted lovers meet again.

"'I weep not for the silent dead,
Their pains are past, their sorrows o'er,
And those that loved their steps must tread,
When death shall join to part no more.'

"But worse than absence, worse than death,
She wept her lover's sullied fame,
And, fired with all the pride of birth,
She wept a soldier's injured name.

Ballad.

THE frank and bold voice of Richard was heard in joyous gratulation.

"Thomas de Vaux! stout Tom of the Gills! by the head of King Henry, thou art welcome to me as ever was flask of wine to a jolly toper! I should scarce have known how to order my battle array, unless I had thy bulky form in mine eye as a landmark to form my ranks upon. We shall have blows anon, Thomas, if the saints be gracious to us; and had we fought in thine absence, I would have looked to hear of thy being found hanging upon an elder-tree."

"I should have borne my disappointment with more Christian patience, I trust," said Thomas de Vaux, "than to have died the death of an apostate. But I thank your Grace for my welcome, which is the more generous, as it respects a banquet of blows, of which, saving your pleasure, you are ever too apt to engross the larger share; but here have I brought one to whom your Grace will, I know, give a yet warmer welcome."

The person who now stepped forward to make obeisance to Richard was a young man of low stature and slight form. His dress was as modest as his figure was unimpressive, but he bore on his bonnet a gold buckle, with a gem, the lustre of which could only be rivalled by the brilliancy of the eye which the bonnet shaded. It was the only striking feature in his countenance; but when once noticed, it ever made a strong impression on the spectator. About his neck there hung in a scarf of sky-blue silk a *wrest*, as it was called,—that is, the key with which a harp is tuned, and which was of solid gold.

This personage would have kneeled reverently to Richard, but the monarch raised him in joyful haste, pressed him to his bosom warmly, and kissed him on either side of the face.

"Blondel de Nesle!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Welcome from Cyprus, my king of minstrels! welcome to the King of England, who rates not his own dignity more highly than he does thine. I have been sick, man, and, by my soul, I believe it was for lack of thee; for, were I half way to the gate of Heaven, methinks thy strains could call me back. And what news, my gentle master, from the land of the lyre? Anything fresh from the *trouveurs* of Provence? anything from the minstrels of merry Normandy?—above all, hast thou thyself been busy? But I need not ask thee—thou canst not be idle, if thou wouldst; thy noble qualities are like a fire burning within, and compel thee to pour thyself out in music and song."

"Something I have learned, and something I have done, noble King," answered the celebrated Blondel, with a retiring modesty which all Richard's enthusiastic admiration of his skill had been unable to banish.

"We will hear thee, man; we will hear thee instantly," said the King; then touching Blondel's shoulder kindly, he added, "that is, if thou art not fatigued with thy journey; for I would sooner ride my best horse to death than injure a note of thy voice."

"My voice is, as ever, at the service of my royal patron," said Blondel; "but your Majesty," he added, looking at some papers on the table, "seems more importantly engaged, and the hour waxes late."

"Not a whit, man, not a whit, my dearest Blondel. I did but sketch an array of battle against the Saracens, a thing of a moment—almost as soon done as the routing of them."

"Methinks, however," said Thomas de Vaux, "it were not unfit to enquire what soldiers your Grace hath to array. I bring reports on that subject from Ascalon."

"Thou art a mule, Thomas," said the King—"a very mule for dulness and obstinacy! Come, nobles—a hall, a hall! Range ye around him. Give Blondel the tabouret. Where is his harp-bearer? or, soft—lend him my harp, his own may be damaged by the journey."

"I would your Grace would take my report," said Thomas de Vaux.

"I have ridden far, and have more list to my bed than to have my ears tickled."

"*Thy* ears tickled!" said the King; "that must be with a woodcock's feather, and not with sweet sounds. Hark thee, Thomas, do thine ears know the singing of Blondel from the braying of an ass?"

"In faith, my liege," replied Thomas, "I cannot well say; but, setting Blondel out of the question, who is a born gentleman, and doubtless of high acquirements, I shall never, for the sake of your Grace's question, look on a minstrel but I shall think upon an ass."

"And might not your manners," said Richard, "have excepted me, who am a gentleman born as well as Blondel, and, like him, a guild-brother of the Joyeuse science?"

"Your Grace should remember," said De Vaux, smiling, "that 'tis useless asking for manners from a mule."

"Most truly spoken," said the King; "and an ill-conditioned animal thou art. But come hither, master mule, and be unloaded, that thou mayst get thee to thy litter, without any music being wasted on thee. Meantime do thou, good brother of Salisbury, go to our consort's tent, and tell her that Blondel has arrived, with his budget fraught with the newest minstrelsy. Bid her come hither instantly, and do thou escort her; and see that our cousin, Edith Plantagenet, remain not behind."

His eye then rested for a moment on the Nubian, with that expression of doubtful meaning which his countenance usually displayed when he looked at him.

"Ha, our silent and secret messenger returned? Stand up, slave, behind the back of De Neville, and thou shalt hear presently sounds which will make thee bless God that He afflicted thee rather with dumbness than deafness."

So saying, he turned from the rest of the company towards De Vaux, and plunged instantly into the military details which that baron laid before him.

About the time that the Lord of Gilsland had finished his audience, a messenger announced that the Queen and her attendants were approaching the royal tent. "A flask of wine, ho!" said the King; "of old King Isaac's long-saved Cyprus, which we won when we stormed Famagosta. Fill to the stout Lord of Gilsland, gentles; a more careful and faithful servant never had any prince."

"I am glad," said Thomas de Vaux, "that your Grace finds the mule a useful slave, though his voice be less musical than horse-hair or wire."

"What, thou canst not yet digest that quip of the mule?" said Richard. "Wash it down with a brimming flagon, man, or thou wilt choke upon it. Why, so—well pulled! And now I will tell thee, thou art a soldier as well as I, and we must brook each other's jests in the hall, as each other's blows in the tourney, and love each other

the harder we hit. By my faith, if thou didst not hit me as hard as I did thee in our late encounter! thou gavest all thy wit to the thrust. But here lies the difference betwixt thee and Blondel. Thou art but my comrade—I might say my pupil—in the art of war; Blondel is my master in the science of minstrelsy and music. To thee I permit the freedom of intimacy; to him I must do reverence, as to my superior in his art. Come, man, be not peevish, but remain and hear our glee."

"To see your Majesty in such cheerful mood," said the Lord of Gilsland, "by my faith, I could remain till Blondel had achieved the great Romance of King Arthur, which lasts for three days."

"We will not tax your patience so deeply," said the King. "But see, yonder glare of torches without shows that our consort approaches. Away to receive her, man, and win thyself grace in the brightest eyes of Christendom. Nay, never stop to adjust thy cloak. See, thou hast let Neville come between the wind and the sails of thy galley!"

"He was never before me in the field of battle," said De Vaux, not greatly pleased to see himself anticipated by the more active service of the chamberlain.

"No, neither he nor any one went before thee there, my good Tom of the Gills," said the King, "unless it was ourself, now and then."

"Ay, my liege," said De Vaux, "and let us do justice to the unfortunate; the unhappy Knight of the Leopard hath been before me, too, at a season; for, look you, he weighs less on horseback, and so——"

"Hush!" said the King, interrupting him in a peremptory tone, "not a word of him!" and instantly stepped forward to greet his royal consort; and when he had done so, he presented to her Blondel, as king of minstrelsy, and his master in the gay science. Berengaria, who well knew that her royal husband's passion for poetry and music almost equalled his appetite for warlike fame, and that Blondel was his especial favourite, took anxious care to receive him with all the flattering distinctions due to one whom the King delighted to honour. Yet it was evident that, though Blondel made suitable returns to the compliments showered on him something too abundantly by the royal beauty, he owned with deeper reverence and more humble gratitude the simple and graceful welcome of Edith, whose kindly greeting appeared to him, perhaps, sincere in proportion to its brevity and simplicity.

Both the Queen and her royal husband were aware of this distinction, and Richard, seeing his consort somewhat piqued at the preference assigned to his cousin, by which perhaps he himself did not feel much gratified, said in the hearing of both, "We minstrels, Berengaria, as thou mayst see by the bearing of our master Blondel,

Blonde singing before the King and the Queen.

pay more reverence to a severe judge, like our kinswoman, than to a kindly partial friend, like thyself, who is willing to take our worth upon trust."

Edith was moved by this sarcasm of her royal kinsman, and hesitated not to reply that, "To be a harsh and severe judge was not an attribute proper to her alone of all the Plantagenets."

She had perhaps said more, having some touch of the temper of that house, which, deriving their name and cognisance from the lowly broom *Planta Genista*, assumed as an emblem of humility, were perhaps one of the proudest families that ever ruled in England; but her eye, when kindling in her reply, suddenly caught those of the Nubian, although he endeavoured to conceal himself behind the nobles who were present, and she sunk upon a seat, turning so pale, that the Queen Berengaria deemed herself obliged to call for water and essences, and to go through the other ceremonies appropriate to a lady's swoon. Richard, who better estimated Edith's strength of mind, called to Blondel to assume his seat and commence his lay, declaring that minstrelsy was worth every other recipe to recall a Plantagenet to life. "Sing us," he said, "that song of the Bloody Vest, of which thou didst formerly give me the argument, ere I left Cyprus; thou must be perfect in it by this time, or, as our yeomen say, thy bow is broken."

The anxious eye of the minstrel, however, dwelt on Edith, and it was not till he observed her returning colour that he obeyed the repeated commands of the King. Then, accompanying his voice with the harp, so as to grace, but yet not drown, the sense of what he sung, he chanted, in a sort of recitative, one of those ancient adventures of love and knighthood which were wont of yore to win the public attention. So soon as he began to prelude, the insignificance of his personal appearance seemed to disappear, and his countenance glowed with energy and inspiration. His full, manly, mellow voice, so absolutely under command of the purest taste, thrilled on every ear, and to every heart. Richard, rejoiced as after victory, called out the appropriate summons for silence,

Listen, lords, in bower and hall;

while with the zeal of a patron at once and a pupil, he arranged the circle around, and hushed them into silence; and he himself sat down with an air of expectation and interest, not altogether unmixed with the gravity of the professed critic. The courtiers turned their eyes on the King, that they might be ready to trace and imitate the emotions his features should express, and Thomas de Vaux yawned tremendously, as one who submitted unwillingly to a wearisome penance. The song of Blondel was of course in the Norman language; but the verses which follow express its meaning and its manner.

THE BLOODY VEST.

'Twas near the fair city of Benevent,
When the sun was setting on bough and bent,
And knights were preparing in bower and tent,
On the eve of the Baptist's tournament;
When in Lincoln green a stripling gent,
Well seeming a page by a princess sent,
Wander'd the camp, and, still as he went,
Enquired for the Englishman, Thomas a Kent.

Far hath he fared, and farther must fare,
Till he finds his pavilion nor stately nor rare—
Little save iron and steel was there;
And, as lacking the coin to pay armourer's care,
With his sinewy arms to the shoulders bare,
The good knight with hammer and file did repair
The mail that to-morrow must see him wear,
For the honour of Saint John and his lady fair.

"Thus speaks my lady," the page said he,
And the knight bent lowly both head and knee.
"She is Benevent's Princess so high in degree,
And thou art as lowly as knight may well be—
He that would climb so lofty a tree,
Or spring such a gulf as divides her from thee,
Must dare some high deed, by which all men may see
His ambition is backed by his hie chivalrie.

"Therefore thus speaks my lady," the fair page he said,
And the knight lowly louted with hand and with head,
"Fling aside the good armour in which thou art clad,
And don thou this weed of her night-gear instead,
For a hauberk of steel, a kirtle of thread:
And charge, thus attired, in the tournament dread,
And fight as thy wont is where most blood is shed,
And bring honour away, or remain with the dead."

Untroubled in his look, and untroubled in his breast,
The knight the weed hath taken and reverently hath kissed:—
"Now blessed be the moment, the messenger be blest!
Much honour'd do I hold me in my lady's high behest;
And say unto my lady, in this dear night-weed dress'd,
To the best armed champion I will not veil my crest;
But if I live and bear me well 'tis her turn to take the test."
Here, gentles, ends the foremost fytte of the Lay of the Bloody Vest."

"Thou hast changed the measure upon us unawares in that last couplet, my Blondel?" said the King.

"Most true, my lord," said Blondel. "I rendered the verses from the Italian of an old harper, whom I met in Cyprus, and not having had time either to translate it accurately, or commit it to memory, I am fain to supply gaps in the music and the verse as I can upon the spur of the moment, as you see boors mend a quickset fence with a fagot."

"Nay, on my faith," said the King, "I like these rattling rolling Alexandrines—methinks they come more twangingly off to the music than that briefer measure."

"Both are licensed, as is well known to your Grace," answered Blondel.

"They are so, Blondel," said Richard; "yet methinks the scene, where there is like to be fighting, will go best on in these same thundering Alexandrines, which sound like the charge of cavalry; while the other measure is but like the sidelong amble of a lady's palfrey."

"It shall be as your Grace pleases," replied Blondel, and began again to prelude.

"Nay, first cherish thy fancy with a cup of fiery Chios wine," said the King; "and hark thee, I would have thee fling away that newfangled restriction of thine, of terminating in accurate and similar rhymes. They are a constraint on thy flow of fancy, and make thee resemble a man dancing in fetters."

"The fetters are easily flung off, at least," said Blondel, again sweeping his fingers over the strings, as one who would rather have played than listened to criticism.

"But why put them on, man?" continued the King. "Wherefore thrust thy genius into iron bracelets? I marvel how you got forward at all—I am sure I should not have been able to compose a stanza in yonder hampered measure."

Blondel looked down and busied himself with the strings of his harp, to hide an involuntary smile which crept over his features; but it escaped not Richard's observation.

"By my faith, thou laugh'st at me, Blondel," he said; "and, in good truth, every man deserves it, who presumes to play the master when he should be the pupil; but we kings get bad habits of self-opinion.—Come, on with thy lay, dearest Blondel—on after thine own fashion, better than aught that we can suggest, though we must needs be talking."

Blondel resumed the lay; but, as extemporaneous composition was familiar to him, he failed not to comply with the King's hints, and was perhaps not displeased to show with how much ease he could new-model a poem even while in the act of recitation.

THE BLOODY VEST.

Fytte Second.

The Baptist's fair morrow beheld gallant feats—
There was winning of honour, and losing of seats—
There was hewing with falchions, and splintering of staves,
The victors won glory, the vanquished won graves.
O, many a knight there fought bravely and well,
Yet one was accounted his peers to excel,

And 'twas he whose sole armour on body and breast,
Seem'd the weed of a damsel when bound for her rest.

There were some dealt him wounds that were bloody and sore,
But others respected his plight and forbore.
"It is some oath of honour," they said, "and I trow,
'Twere unknightly to slay him achieving his vow."
Then the Prince, for his sake, bade the tournament cease,
He flung down his warder, the trumpets sung peace;
And the judges declare, and competitors yield,
That the Knight of the Night-gear was first in the field.

The feast it was nigh, and the mass it was nigher,
When before the fair Princess low louted a squire,
And deliver'd a garment unseemly to view,
With sword-cut and spear-thrust, all hack'd and pierced through;
All rent and all tatter'd, all clotted with blood,
With foam of the horses, with dust, and with mud.
Not the point of that lady's small finger I ween,
Could have rested on spot was unsullied and clean.

"This token my master, Sir Thomas a Kent,
Restores to the Princess of fair Benevent;
He that climbs the tall tree has won right to the fruit,
He that leaps the wide gulf should prevail in his suit;
Through life's utmost peril the prize I have won,
And now must the faith of my mistress be shown;
For she who prompts knights on such danger to run,
Must avouch his true service in front of the sun.

"'I restore,' says my master, 'the garment I've worn,
And I claim of the Princess to don it in turn;
For its stains and its rents she should prize it the more,
Since by shame 'tis unsullied, though crimson'd with gore.'
Then deep blushed the Princess—yet kiss'd she and press'd
The blood-spotted robes to her lips and her breast.
"Go tell my true knight, church and chamber shall show,
If I value the blood on this garment or no."

And when it was time for the nobles to pass
In solemn procession to minster and mass,
The first walk'd the Princess in purple and pall,
But the blood-besmeared night-robe she wore over all;
And eke, in the hall, where they all sat at dine,
When she knelt to her father and proffered the wine,
Over all her rich robes and state jewels, she wore
That wimple unseemly bedabbled with gore.

Then lords whisper'd ladies, as well you may think,
And ladies replied with nod, titter, and wink;
And the Prince, who in anger and shame had look'd down,
Turn'd at length to his daughter, and spoke with a frown:
"Now since thou hast published thy folly and guilt,
E'en atone with thy hand for the blood thou hast spilt;
Yet sore for your boldness you both will repent,
When you wander as exiles from fair Benevent."

Then out spoke stout Thomas, in hall where he stood,
Exhausted and feeble, but dauntless of mood:
"The blood that I lost for this daughter of thine,
I pour'd forth as freely as flask gives its wine;
And if for my sake she brooks penance and blame,
Do not doubt I will save her from suffering and shame;
And light will she reck of thy princedom and rent,
When I hail her, in England, the Countess of Kent!"

A murmur of applause ran through the assembly, following the example of Richard himself, who loaded with praises his favourite minstrel, and ended by presenting him with a ring of considerable value. The Queen hastened to distinguish the favourite by a rich bracelet, and many of the nobles who were present followed the royal example.

"Is our cousin Edith," said the King, "become insensible to the sound of the harp she once loved?"

"She thanks Blondel for his lay," replied Edith, "but doubly the kindness of the kinsman who suggested it."

"Thou art angry, cousin," said the King; "angry because thou hast heard of a woman more wayward than thyself. But you escape me not—I will walk a space homeward with you towards the Queen's pavilion; we must have conference together ere the night has waned into morning."

The Queen and her attendants were now on foot, and the other guests withdrew from the royal tent. A train with blazing torches, and an escort of archers, awaited Berengaria without the pavilion, and she was soon on her way homeward. Richard, as he had proposed, walked beside his kinswoman, and compelled her to accept of his arm as her support, so that they could speak to each other without being overheard.

"What answer, then, am I to return to the noble Soldan?" said Richard. "The Kings and Princes are falling from me, Edith—this new quarrel hath alienated them once more. I would do something for the Holy Sepulchre by composition, if not by victory; and the chance of my doing this depends, alas, on the caprice of a woman. I would lay my single spear in the rest against ten of the best lances in Christendom, rather than argue with a wilful wench, who knows not what is for her own good. What answer, coz, am I to return to the Soldan? It must be decisive."

"Tell him," said Edith, "that the poorest of the Plantagenets will rather wed with misery than with misbelief."

"Shall I say with *slavery*, Edith?" said the King. "Methinks that is nearer thy thoughts."

"There is no room," said Edith, "for the suspicion you so grossly insinuate. Slavery of the body might have been pitied, but that of the soul is only to be despised. Shame to thee, King of merry England!

thou hast enthralled both the limbs and the spirit of a knight once scarce less famed than thyself."

"Should I not prevent my kinswoman from drinking poison, by sullying the vessel which contained it, if I saw no other means of disgusting her with the fatal liquor?" replied the King.

"It is thyself," answered Edith, "that would press me to drink poison, because it is proffered in a golden chalice."

"Edith," said Richard, "I cannot force thy resolution; but beware you shut not the door which Heaven opens. The hermit of Engaddi, he whom Popes and Councils have regarded as a prophet, hath read in the stars that thy marriage shall reconcile me with a powerful enemy, and that thy husband shall be Christian, leaving thus the fairest ground to hope, that the conversion of the Soldan, and the bringing in of the sons of Ishmael to the pale of the Church, will be the consequence of thy wedding with Saladin. Come, thou must make some sacrifice rather than mar such happy prospects."

"Men may sacrifice rams and goats," said Edith, "but not honour and conscience. I have heard that it was the dishonour of a Christian maiden which brought the Saracens into Spain: the shame of another is no likely mode of expelling them from Palestine."

"Dost thou call it shame to become an Empress?" said the King.

"I call it shame and dishonour to profane a Christian sacrament by entering into it with an infidel whom it cannot bind; and I call it foul dishonour, that I, the descendant of a Christian princess, should become of free-will the head of a harem of heathen concubines."

"Well, kinswoman," said the King, after a pause, "I must not quarrel with thee, though I think thy dependent condition might have dictated more compliance."

"My liege," replied Edith, "your Grace hath worthily succeeded to all the wealth, dignity, and dominion of the House of Plantagenet: do not, therefore, begrudge your poor kinswoman some small share of their pride."

"By my faith, wench," said the King, "thou hast unhorsed me with that very word! so we will kiss and be friends. I will presently dispatch thy answer to Saladin. But after all, coz, were it not better to suspend your answer till you have seen him? Men say he is pre-eminently handsome."

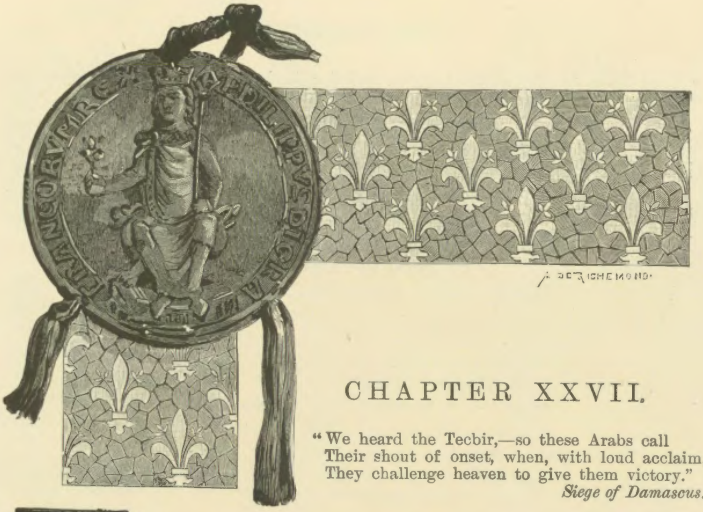
"There is no chance of our meeting, my lord," said Edith.

"By Saint George, but there is next to a certainty of it," said the King; "for Saladin will doubtless afford us a free field for the doing of this new battle of the standard, and will witness it himself. Berengaria is wild to behold it also, and I dare be sworn not a feather of you, her companions and attendants, will remain behind—least of all thou thyself, fair coz. But come, we have reached the pavilion, and must part—not in unkindness though; nay, thou must seal it with thy

lip as well as thy hand, sweet Edith; it is my right as a sovereign to kiss my pretty vassals."

He embraced her respectfully and affectionately, and returned through the moonlit camp, humming to himself such snatches of Blondel's lay as he could recollect.

On his arrival, he lost no time in making up his dispatches for Saladin, and delivered them to the Nubian, with a charge to set out by peep of day on his return to the Soldan.



CHAPTER XXVII.

"We heard the Tecbir,—so these Arabs call
Their shout of onset, when, with loud acclaim,
They challenge heaven to give them victory."
Siege of Damascus.

ON the subsequent morning, Richard was invited to a conference by Philip of France, in which the latter, with many expressions of his high esteem for his brother of England, communicated to him, in terms extremely courteous but too explicit to be misunderstood, his positive intention to return to Europe, and to the cares of his kingdom, as entirely despairing of future success in their undertaking, with their diminished forces and civil discords. Richard remonstrated, but in vain; and when the conference ended, he received without surprise a manifesto from the Duke of Austria, and several other princes, announcing a resolution similar to that of Philip, and in no modified terms assigning, for their defection from the cause of the Cross, the inordinate ambition and arbitrary domination of Richard of England. All hopes of continuing the war with any prospect of ultimate success were now abandoned, and Richard, while he shed bitter tears over his disappointed hopes of glory, was little consoled by the recollection that the failure was in some degree to be imputed to the advantages which he had given his enemies by his own hasty and imprudent temper.

"They had not dared to have deserted my father thus," he said to De Vaux, in the bitterness of his resentment.—"No slanders they could have uttered against so wise a king would have been believed in Christendom; whereas,—fool that I am!—I have not only afforded them a pretext for deserting me, but even a colour for casting all the blame of the rupture upon my unhappy foibles."

These thoughts were so deeply galling to the King, that De Vaux

was rejoiced when the arrival of an ambassador from Saladin turned his reflections into a different channel.

This new envoy was an Emir much respected by the Soldan, whose name was Abdallah el Hadgi. He derived his descent from the family of the Prophet, and the race or tribe of Hashem, in witness of which genealogy he wore a green turban of large dimensions. He had also three times performed the journey to Mecca, from which he derived his epithet of El Hadgi, or the Pilgrim. Notwithstanding these various pretensions to sanctity, Abdallah was (for an Arab) a boon companion, who enjoyed a merry tale, and laid aside his gravity so far as to quaff a blithe flagon, when secrecy ensured him against scandal. He was likewise a statesman, whose abilities had been used by Saladin in various negotiations with the Christian Princes, and particularly with Richard, to whom El Hadgi was personally known and acceptable. Animated by the cheerful acquiescence with which the envoy of Saladin afforded a fair field for the combat, a safe conduct for all who might choose to witness it, and offered his own person as a guarantee of his fidelity, Richard soon forgot his disappointed hopes, and the approaching dissolution of the Christian league, in the interesting discussions preceding a combat in the lists.

The station, called the Diamond of the Desert, was assigned for the place of conflict, as being nearly at an equal distance betwixt the Christian and Saracen camps. It was agreed that Conrade of Montserrat, the defendant, with his godfathers, the Archduke of Austria and the Grand Master of the Templars, should appear there on the day fixed for the combat, with an hundred armed followers, and no more; that Richard of England, and his brother Salisbury, who supported the accusation, should attend with the same number, to protect his champion; and that the Soldan should bring with him a guard of five hundred chosen followers, a band considered as not more than equal to the two hundred Christian lances. Such persons of consideration as either party chose to invite to witness the contest, were to wear no other weapons than their swords, and to come without defensive armour. The Soldan undertook the preparation of the lists, and to provide accommodations and refreshments of every kind for all who were to assist at the solemnity; and his letters expressed, with much courtesy, the pleasure which he anticipated in the prospect of a personal and peaceful meeting with the Melech Ric, and his anxious desire to render his reception as agreeable as possible.

All preliminaries being arranged, and communicated to the defendant and his godfathers, Abdallah the Hadgi was admitted to a more private interview, where he heard with delight the strains of Blondel. Having first carefully put his green turban out of sight, and assumed a Greek cap in its stead, he requited the Norman minstrel's music with a drinking song from the Persian, and quaffed a hearty flagon of Cyprus wine, to show that his practice matched his principles.

On the next day, grave and sober as the water-drinker Mirglip, he bent his brow to the ground before Saladin's footstool, and rendered to the Soldan an account of his embassy.

On the day before that appointed for the combat, Conrade and his friends set off by daybreak to repair to the place assigned, and Richard left the camp at the same hour, and for the same purpose; but, as had been agreed upon, he took his journey by a different route, a precaution which had been judged necessary to prevent the possibility of a quarrel betwixt their armed attendants.

The good King himself was in no humour for quarrelling with any one. Nothing could have added to his pleasurable anticipations of a desperate and bloody combat in the lists, except his being in his own royal person one of the combatants; and he was half in charity again even with Conrade of Montserrat. Lightly armed, richly dressed, and gay as a bridegroom on the eve of his nuptials, Richard caracoled along by the side of Queen Berengaria's litter, pointing out to her the various scenes through which they passed, and cheering with tale and song the bosom of the inhospitable wilderness. The former route of the Queen's pilgrimage to Engaddi had been on the other side of the chain of mountains, so that the ladies were strangers to the scenery of the desert; and though Berengaria knew her husband's disposition too well not to endeavour to seem interested in what he was pleased either to say or to sing, she could not help indulging some female fears when she found herself in the howling wilderness with so small an escort, which seemed almost like a moving speck on the bosom of the plain, and knew, at the same time, they were not so distant from the camp of Saladin but what they might be in a moment surprised and swept off by an overpowering host of his fiery-footed cavalry, should the Pagan be faithless enough to embrace an opportunity thus tempting. But when she hinted these suspicions to Richard, he repelled them with displeasure and disdain. "It were worse than ingratitude," he said, "to doubt the good faith of the generous Soldan."

Yet the same doubts and fears recurred more than once, not to the timid mind of the Queen alone, but to the firmer and more candid soul of Edith Plantagenet, who had no such confidence in the faith of the Moslem as to render her perfectly at ease when so much in their power; and her surprise had been far less than her terror, if the desert around had suddenly resounded with the shout of Alla hu! and a band of Arab cavalry had pounced on them like vultures on their prey. Nor were these suspicions lessened, when, as evening approached, they were aware of a single Arab horseman, distinguished by his turban and long lance, hovering on the edge of a small eminence like a hawk poised in the air, and who instantly, on the appearance of the royal retinue, darted off with the speed of the same bird, when it shoots down the wind and disappears from the horizon.

"We must be near the station," said King Richard; "and yonder

cavalier is one of Saladin's outposts—methinks I hear the noise of the Moorish horns and cymbals. Get you into order, my hearts, and form yourselves around the ladies

"Richard caracoled by the side of the Queen's litter" (p. 276).

soldier-like and firmly."

As he spoke, each knight, squire, and archer hastily closed in upon his appointed ground, and they proceeded in the most

compact order, which made their numbers appear still smaller; and to say the truth, though there might be no fear, there was anxiety as well as curiosity in the attention with which they listened to the wild bursts of Moorish music which came ever and anon more distinctly from the quarter in which the Arab horseman had been seen to disappear.

De Vaux spoke in a whisper to the King. "Were it not well, my liege, to send a page to the top of that sandbank? Or would it stand with your pleasure that I prick forward? Methinks, by all yonder clash and clang, if there be no more than five hundred men beyond the sand-hills, half of the Soldan's retinue must be drummers and cymbal-tossers.—Shall I spur on?"

The baron had checked his horse with the bit, and was just about to strike him with the spurs, when the King exclaimed, "Not for the world. Such a caution would express suspicion, and could do little to prevent surprise, which, however, I apprehend not."

They advanced accordingly in close and firm order till they surmounted the line of low sand-hills and came in sight of the appointed station, when a splendid but at the same time a startling spectacle awaited them.

The Diamond of the Desert, so lately a solitary fountain, distinguished only amid the waste by solitary groups of palm-trees, was now the centre of an encampment, the embroidered flags and gilded ornaments of which glittered far and wide, and reflected a thousand rich tints against the setting sun. The coverings of the large pavilions were of the gayest colours, scarlet, bright yellow, pale blue, and other gaudy and gleaming hues, and the tops of their pillars, or tent-poles, were decorated with golden pomegranates, and small silken flags. But besides these distinguished pavilions there were, what Thomas de Vaux considered as a portentous number of the ordinary black tents of the Arabs, being sufficient, as he conceived, to accommodate, according to the Eastern fashion, a host of five thousand men. A number of Arabs and Curds, fully corresponding to the extent of the encampment, were hastily assembling, each leading his horse in his hand, and their muster was accompanied by an astonishing clamour of their noisy instruments of martial music, by which, in all ages, the warfare of the Arabs has been animated.

They soon formed a deep and confused mass of dismounted cavalry in front of their encampment, when, at the signal of a shrill cry, which arose high over the clangour of the music, each cavalier sprung to his saddle. A cloud of dust, arising at the moment of this manœuvre, hid from Richard and his attendants the camp, the palm-trees, and the distant ridge of mountains, as well as the troops whose sudden movement had raised the cloud, and, ascending high over their heads, formed itself into the fantastic forms of writhed pillars, domes, and minarets. Another shrill yell was heard from the bosom of this cloudy tabernacle.

It was the signal for the cavalry to advance, which they did at full gallop, disposing themselves as they came forward, so as to come in at once on the front, flanks, and rear of Richard's little body-guard, who were thus surrounded, and almost choked, by the dense clouds of dust enveloping them on each side, through which were seen alternately, and lost, the grim forms and wild faces of the Saracens, brandishing and tossing their lances in every possible direction, with the wildest cries and halloos, and frequently only reining up their horses when within a spear's length of the Christians, while those in the rear discharged over the heads of both parties thick volleys of arrows. One of these struck the litter in which the Queen was seated, who loudly screamed, and the red spot was on Richard's brow in an instant.

"Ha! Saint George," he exclaimed, "we must take some order with this infidel scum!"

But Edith, whose litter was near, thrust her head out, and with her hand holding one of the shafts, exclaimed, "Royal Richard, beware what you do! see, these arrows are headless!"

"Noble, sensible wench!" exclaimed Richard; "by Heaven, thou shamest us all by thy readiness of thought and eye. Be not moved, my English hearts," he exclaimed, to his followers—"their arrows have no heads—and their spears, too, lack the steel points. It is but a wild welcome, after their savage fashion, though doubtless they would rejoice to see us daunted or disturbed. Move onward, slow and steady."

The little phalanx moved forward accordingly, accompanied on all sides by the Arabs, with the shrillest and most piercing cries, the bowmen, meanwhile, displaying their agility by shooting as near the crests of the Christians as was possible, without actually hitting them, while the lancers charged each other with such rude blows of their blunt weapons, that more than one of them lost his saddle, and wellnigh his life, in this rough sport. All this, though designed to express welcome, had rather a doubtful appearance in the eyes of the Europeans.

As they had advanced nearly halfway towards the camp, King Richard and his suite forming, as it were, the nucleus round which this tumultuary body of horsemen howled, whooped, skirmished, and galloped, creating a scene of indescribable confusion, another shrill cry was heard, on which all these irregulars, who were on the front and upon the flanks of the little body of Europeans, wheeled off, and forming themselves into a long and deep column, followed with comparative order and silence in the rear of Richard's troop. The dust began now to dissipate in their front, when there advanced to meet them, through that cloudy veil, a body of cavalry of a different and more regular description, completely armed with offensive and defensive weapons, and who might well have served as a body-guard to the proudest of Eastern monarchs. This splendid troop consisted of five hundred men, and each horse which it contained was worth an earl's ransom. The riders were Georgian and Circassian slaves in the very prime of life; their

helmets and hauberks were formed of steel rings, so bright that they shone like silver; their vestures were of the gayest colours, and some of cloth of gold or silver; the sashes were twisted with silk and gold, their rich turbans were plumed and jewelled, and their sabres and poniards, of Damascene steel, were adorned with gold and gems on hilt and scabbard.

This splendid array advanced to the sound of military music, and when they met the Christian body, they opened their files to the right and left, and let them enter between their ranks. Richard now assumed the foremost place in his troop, aware that Saladin himself was approaching. Nor was it long when, in the centre of his body-guard, surrounded by his domestic officers, and those hideous negroes who guard the Eastern harem, and whose misshapen forms were rendered yet more frightful by the richness of their attire, came the Soldan, with the look and manners of one on whose brow Nature had written, This is a King! In his snow-white turban, vest, and wide Eastern trousers, wearing a sash of scarlet silk, without any other ornament, Saladin might have seemed the plainest dressed man in his own guard. But closer inspection discerned in his turban that inestimable gem which was called by the poets the Sea of Light; the diamond on which his signet was engraved, and which he wore in a ring, was probably worth all the jewels of the English crown, and a sapphire, which terminated the hilt of his canjiar, was not of much inferior value. It should be added, that to protect him from the dust, which, in the vicinity of the Dead Sea, resembles the finest ashes, or, perhaps, out of Oriental pride, the Soldan wore a sort of veil attached to his turban, which partly obscured the view of his noble features. He rode a milk-white Arabian, which bore him as if conscious and proud of his noble burden.

There was no need of farther introduction. The two heroic monarchs, for such they both were, threw themselves at once from horseback, and the troops halting and the music suddenly ceasing, they advanced to meet each other in profound silence, and, after a courteous inclination on either side, they embraced as brethren and equals. The pomp and display upon both sides attracted no farther notice—no one saw aught save Richard and Saladin, and they too beheld nothing but each other. The looks with which Richard surveyed Saladin were, however, more intently curious than those which the Soldan fixed upon him; and the Soldan also was the first to break silence.

"The Melech Ric is welcome to Saladin as water to this desert! I trust he hath no distrust of this numerous array? Excepting the armed slaves of my household, those who surround you with eyes of wonder and of welcome are, even the humblest of them, the privileged nobles of my thousand tribes; for who that could claim a title to be present would remain at home when such a Prince was to be seen as

Richard, with the terrors of whose name, even on the sands of Yemen, the nurse stills her child, and the free Arab subdues his restive steed!"

"And these are all nobles of Araby?" said Richard, looking around on wild forms with their persons covered with haicks, their countenance swart with the sunbeams, their teeth as white as ivory, their black eyes glancing with fierce and preternatural lustre from under the shade of their turbans, and their dress being in general simple, even to meanness.

"They claim such rank," said Saladin; "but though numerous, they are within the conditions of the treaty, and bear no arms but the sabre—even the iron of their lances is left behind."

"I fear," muttered De Vaux in English, "they have left them where they can be soon found. A most flourishing House of Peers, I confess, and would find Westminster Hall something too narrow for them."

"Hush, De Vaux," said Richard, "I command thee. Noble Saladin," he said, "suspicion and thou cannot exist on the same ground.—Seest thou," pointing to the litters—"I too have brought some champions with me, though armed, perhaps, in breach of agreement, for bright eyes and fair features are weapons which cannot be left behind."

The Soldan, turning to the litters, made an obeisance as lowly as if looking towards Mecca, and kissed the sand in token of respect.

"Nay," said Richard,—"they will not fear a closer encounter, brother; wilt thou not ride towards their litters, and the curtains will be presently withdrawn?"

"That may Alla prohibit!" said Saladin, "since not an Arab looks on, who would not think it shame to the noble ladies to be seen with their faces uncovered."

"Thou shalt see them, then, in private, my royal brother," answered Richard.

"To what purpose?" answered Saladin, mournfully. "Thy last letter was, to the hopes which I had entertained, like water to fire; and wherefore should I again light a flame, which may indeed consume, but cannot cheer me? But will not my brother pass to the tent which his servant hath prepared for him? My principal black slave hath taken order for the reception of the Princesses—the officers of my household will attend your followers, and ourself will be the chamberlain of the royal Richard."

He led the way accordingly to a splendid pavilion, where was everything that royal luxury could devise. De Vaux, who was in attendance, then removed the chappe, (*capa,*) or long riding-cloak which Richard wore, and he stood before Saladin in the close dress which showed to advantage the strength and symmetry of his person, while it bore a strong contrast to the flowing robes which disguised the thin frame of the Eastern monarch. It was Richard's two-handed sword that chiefly

attracted the attention of the Saracen, a broad straight blade, the seemingly unwieldy length of which extended well-nigh from the shoulder to the heel of the wearer.

"Had I not," said Saladin, "seen this brand flaming in the front of battle, like that of Azrael, I had scarce believed that human arm could wield it. Might I request to see the Melech Ric strike one blow with it in peace, and in pure trial of strength?"

"Willingly, noble Saladin," answered Richard; and looking around for something whereon to exercise his strength, he saw a steel mace, held by one of the attendants, the handle being of the same metal, and about an inch and a half in diameter. This he placed on a block of wood.

The anxiety of De Vaux for his master's honour led him to whisper in English, "For the blessed Virgin's sake, beware what you attempt, my liege! Your full strength is not as yet returned; give no triumph to the infidel."

"Peace, fool!" said Richard, standing firm on his ground, and casting a fierce glance around; "thinkest thou that I can fail in *his* presence?"

The glittering broadsword, wielded by both his hands, rose aloft to the King's left shoulder, circled round his head, descended with the sway of some terrific engine, and the bar of iron rolled on the ground in two pieces as a woodsman would sever a sapling with a hedging-bill.

"By the head of the Prophet, a most wonderful blow!" said the Soldan, critically and accurately examining the iron bar which had been cut asunder; and the blade of the sword was so well tempered as to exhibit not the least token of having suffered by the feat it had performed. He then took the King's hand, and looking on the size and muscular strength which it exhibited, laughed as he placed it beside his own, so lank and thin, so inferior in brawn and sinew.

"Ay, look well," said De Vaux, in English, "it will be long ere your long jackanapes fingers do such a feat with your fine gilded reaping-hook there."

"Silence, De Vaux," said Richard; "by Our Lady, he understands or guesses thy meaning; be not so broad, I pray thee."

The Soldan, indeed, presently said, "Something I would fain attempt—though, wherefore should the weak show their inferiority in presence of the strong? Yet, each land hath its own exercises, and this may be new to the Melech Ric." So saying, he took from the floor a cushion of silk and down, and placed it upright on one end. "Can thy weapon, my brother, sever that cushion?" he said to King Richard.

"No, surely," replied the King; "no sword on earth, were it the Excalibar of King Arthur, can cut that which opposes no steady resistance to the blow."

"Mark, then," said Saladin; and, tucking up the sleeve of his

gown, showed his arm, thin indeed and spare, but which constant exercise had hardened into a mass consisting of nought but bone, brawn, and sinew. He unsheathed his scimitar, a curved and narrow blade, which glittered not like the swords of the Franks, but was, on the contrary, of a dull blue colour, marked with ten millions of meandering lines, which showed how anxiously the metal had been welded by the armourer. Wielding this weapon, apparently so inefficient when compared to that of Richard, the Soldan stood resting his weight upon his left foot, which was slightly advanced; he balanced himself a little as if to steady his aim, then stepping at once forward, drew the scimitar across the cushion, applying the edge so dexterously, and with so little apparent effort, that the cushion seemed rather to fall asunder than to be divided by violence.

"It is a juggler's trick," said De Vaux, darting forward and snatching up the portion of the cushion which had been cut off, as if to assure himself of the reality of the feat,—"there is gramarye in this."

The Soldan seemed to comprehend him, for he undid the sort of veil which he had hitherto worn, laid it double along the edge of his sabre, extended the weapon edgeways in the air, and drawing it suddenly through the veil, although it hung on the blade entirely loose, severed that also into two parts, which floated to different sides of the tent, equally displaying the extreme temper and sharpness of the weapon, and the exquisite dexterity of him who used it.

"Now, in good faith, my brother," said Richard, "thou art even matchless at the trick of the sword, and right perilous were it to meet thee! Still, however, I put some faith in a downright English blow, and what we cannot do by sleight, we eke out by strength. Nevertheless, in truth thou art as expert in inflicting wounds as my sage Hakim in curing them. I trust I shall see the learned leech—I have much to thank him for, and had brought some small present."

As he spoke, Saladin exchanged his turban for a Tartar cap. He had no sooner done so, than De Vaux opened at once his extended mouth and his large round eyes, and Richard gazed with scarce less astonishment, while the Soldan spoke in a grave and altered voice: "The sick man, sayeth the poet, while he is yet infirm, knoweth the physician by his step; but when he is recovered, he knoweth not even his face when he looks upon him."

"A miracle!—a miracle!" exclaimed Richard.

"Of Mahound's working, doubtless," said Thomas de Vaux.

"That I should lose my learned Hakim," said Richard, "merely by absence of his cap and robe, and that I should find him again in my royal brother Saladin!"

"Such is oft the fashion of the world," answered the Soldan; "the tattered robe makes not always the dervisch."

"And it was through thy intercession," said Richard, "that yonder

Knight of the Leopard was saved from death—and by thy artifice that he revisited my camp in disguise?"

"Even so," replied Saladin; "I was physician enough to know, that unless the wounds of his bleeding honour were stanched the days of his life must be few. His disguise was more easily penetrated than I had expected from the success of my own."

"An accident," said King Richard, (probably alluding to the circumstance of his applying his lips to the wound of the supposed Nubian,) "let me first know that his skin was artificially discoloured; and that hint once taken, detection became easy, for his form and person are not to be forgotten. I confidently expect that he will do battle on the morrow."

"He is full in preparation, and high in hope," said the Soldan. "I have furnished him with weapons and horse, thinking nobly of him from what I have seen under various disguises."

"Knows he now," said Richard, "to whom he lies under obligation?"

"He doth," replied the Saracen. "I was obliged to confess my person when I unfolded my purpose."

"And confessed he aught to you?" said the King of England.

"Nothing explicit," replied the Soldan; "but from much that passed between us, I conceive his love is too highly placed to be happy in its issue."

"And thou knowest that his daring and insolent passion crossed thine own wishes?" said Richard.

"I might guess so much," said Saladin; "but his passion had existed ere my wishes had been formed—and, I must now add, is likely to survive them. I cannot, in honour, revenge me for my disappointment on him who had no hand in it. Or, if this high-born dame loved him better than myself, who can say that she did not justice to a knight, of her own religion, who is full of nobleness?"

"Yet of too mean lineage to mix with the blood of Plantagenet," said Richard, haughtily.

"Such may be your maxims in Frangistan," replied the Soldan. "Our poets of the Eastern countries say, that a valiant camel-driver is worthy to kiss the lip of a fair Queen, when a cowardly prince is not worthy to salute the hem of her garment. But with your permission, noble brother, I must take leave of thee for the present, to receive the Duke of Austria and yonder Nazarene knight, much less worthy of hospitality, but who must yet be suitably entreated, not for their sakes, but for mine own honour: for what saith the sage Lokman? 'Say not that the food is lost unto thee which is given to the stranger; for if his body be strengthened and fattened therewithal, not less is thine own worship and good name cherished and augmented.'"

The Saracen Monarch departed from King Richard's tent, and having indicated to him, rather with signs than with speech, where

the pavilion of the Queen and her attendants was pitched, he went to receive the Marquis of Montserrat and his attendants, for whom, with less good-will, but with equal splendour, the magnificent Soldan had provided accommodations. The most ample refreshments, both in the Oriental and after the European fashion, were spread before the royal and princely guests of Saladin, each in their own separate pavilion; and so attentive was the Soldan to the habits and taste of his visitors, that Grecian slaves were stationed to present them with the goblet, which is the abomination of the sect of Mahommed. Ere Richard had finished his meal, the ancient Omrah, who had brought the Soldan's letter to the Christian camp, entered with a plan of the ceremonial to be observed on the succeeding day of combat. Richard, who knew the taste of his old acquaintance, invited him to pledge him in a flagon of wine of Schiraz; but Abdallah gave him to understand, with a rueful aspect, that self-denial, in the present circumstances, was a matter in which his life was concerned; for that Saladin, tolerant in many respects, both observed, and enforced by high penalties, the laws of the Prophet.

"Nay, then," said Richard, "if he loves not wine, that lightener of the human heart, his conversion is not to be hoped for, and the prediction of the mad priest of Engaddi goes like chaff down the wind."

The King then addressed himself to settle the articles of combat, which cost considerable time, as it was necessary on some points to consult with the opposite parties, as well as with the Soldan.

They were at length finally agreed upon, and adjusted by a protocol in French and in Arabian, which was subscribed by Saladin as umpire of the field, and by Richard and Leopold as guarantees for the two combatants. As the Omrah took his final leave of King Richard for the evening, De Vaux entered.

"The good knight," he said, "who is to do battle to-morrow, requests to know whether he may not to-night pay duty to his royal godfather?"

"Hast thou seen him, De Vaux?" said the King, smiling; "and didst thou know an ancient acquaintance?"

"By our Lady of Lanercost," answered De Vaux, "there are so many surprises and changes in this land, that my poor brain turns. I scarce knew Sir Kenneth of Scotland, till his good hound, that had been for a short while under my care, came and fawned on me; and even then I only knew the tyke by the depth of his chest, the roundness of his foot, and his manner of baying; for the poor gaze-hound was painted like any Venetian courtezan."

"Thou art better skilled in brutes than men, De Vaux," said the King.

"I will not deny," said De Vaux, "I have found them ofttimes the honester animals. Also, your Grace is pleased to term me sometimes a

brute myself; besides that I serve the Lion, whom all men acknowledge the king of brutes."

"By Saint George, there thou brokest thy lance fairly on my brow," said the King. "I have ever said thou hast a sort of wit, De Vaux—marry, one must strike thee with a sledge-hammer ere it can be made to sparkle. But to the present gear: is the good knight well armed and equipped?"

"Fully, my liege, and nobly," answered De Vaux; "I know the armour well—it is that which the Venetian commissary offered your highness, just ere you became ill, for five hundred bezants."

"And he hath sold it to the infidel Soldan, I warrant me, for a few ducats more, and present payment. These Venetians would sell the sepulchre itself!"

"The armour will never be borne in a nobler cause," said De Vaux.

"Thanks to the nobleness of the Saracen," said the King, "not to the avarice of the Venetians."

"I would to God your Grace would be more cautious," said the anxious De Vaux. "Here are we deserted by all our allies, for points of offence given to one or another; we cannot hope to prosper upon the land, and we have only to quarrel with the amphibious republic, to lose the means of retreat by sea!"

"I will take care," said Richard, impatiently; "but school me no more. Tell me rather, for it is of interest, hath the knight a confessor?"

"He hath," answered De Vaux; "the hermit of Engaddi, who erst did him that office when preparing for death, attends him on the present occasion; the fame of the duel having brought him hither."

"'Tis well," said Richard; "and now for the knight's request. Say to him, Richard will receive him when the discharge of his devoir beside the Diamond of the Desert shall have atoned for his fault beside the Mount of Saint George; and as thou passest through the camp, let the Queen know I will visit her pavilion—and tell Blondel to meet me there."

De Vaux departed, and in about an hour afterwards, Richard, wrapping his mantle around him, and taking his ghittern in his hand, walked in the direction of the Queen's pavilion. Several Arabs passed him, but always with averted heads, and looks fixed upon the earth, though he could observe that all gazed earnestly after him when he was passed. This led him justly to conjecture that his person was known to them; but that either the Soldan's commands, or their own Oriental politeness, forbade them to seem to notice a sovereign who desired to remain incognito.

When the King reached the pavilion of his Queen, he found it guarded by those unhappy officials whom Eastern jealousy places around the zenana. Blondel was walking before the door, and touched his rote from time to time, in a manner which made the Africans show

their ivory teeth, and bear burden with their strange gestures and shrill unnatural voices.

"What art thou after with this herd of black cattle, Blondel?" said the King; "wherefore goest thou not into the tent?"

"Because my trade can spare neither the head nor the fingers," said Blondel; "and these honest blackamoors threatened to cut me joint from joint if I pressed forward."

"Well, enter with me," said the King, "and I will be thy safeguard."

The blacks accordingly lowered pikes and swords to King Richard, and bent their eyes on the ground, as if unworthy to look upon him. In the interior of the pavilion, they found Thomas de Vaux in attendance on the Queen. While Berengaria welcomed Blondel, King Richard spoke for some time secretly and apart with his fair kinswoman.

At length, "Are we still foes, my fair Edith?" he said, in a whisper.

"No, my liege," said Edith, in a voice just so low as not to interrupt the music; "none can bear enmity against King Richard, when he deigns to show himself, as he really is, generous and noble, as well as valiant and honourable."

So saying, she extended her hand to him. The King kissed it in token of reconciliation, and then proceeded.

"You think, my sweet cousin, that my anger in this matter was feigned; but you are deceived. The punishment I inflicted upon this knight was just; for he had betrayed—no matter for how tempting a bribe, fair cousin—the trust committed to him. But I rejoice, perchance as much as you, that to-morrow gives him a chance to win the field, and throw back the stain which for a time clung to him, upon the actual thief and traitor. No!—future times may blame Richard for impetuous folly; but they shall say that, in rendering judgment, he was just when he should, and merciful when he could."

"Laud not thyself, cousin King," said Edith. "They may call thy justice cruelty—thy mercy caprice."

"And do not thou pride thyself," said the King, "as if thy knight, who hath not yet buckled on his armour, were unbelting it in triumph—Conrade of Montserrat is held a good lance. What if the Scot should lose the day?"

"It is impossible!" said Edith, firmly. "My own eyes saw yonder Conrade tremble and change colour, like a base thief. He is guilty—and the trial by combat is an appeal to the justice of God. I myself, in such a cause, would encounter him without fear."

"By the mass, I think thou wouldst, wench," said the King, "and beat him to boot; for there never breathed a truer Plantagenet than thou."

He paused, and added in a very serious tone, "See that thou continue to remember what is due to thy birth."

"What means that advice, so seriously given at this moment?" said Edith. "Am I of such light nature as to forget my name—my condition?"

"I will speak plainly, Edith," answered the King, "and as to a friend. What will this knight be to you, should he come off victor from yonder lists?"

"To *me?*" said Edith, blushing deep with shame and displeasure. "What *can* he be to me more than an honoured knight, worthy of such grace as Queen Berengaria might confer on him, had he selected her for his lady, instead of a more unworthy choice? The meanest knight may devote himself to the service of an empress, but the glory of his choice," she said proudly, "must be his reward."

"Yet he hath served and suffered much for you," said the King.

"I have paid his services with honour and applause, and his sufferings with tears," answered Edith. "Had he desired other reward he would have done wisely to have bestowed his affections within his his own degree."

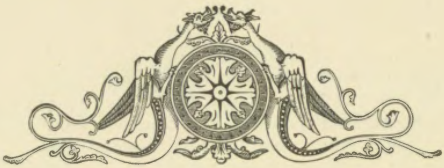
"You would not then wear the bloody nightgear for his sake?' said King Richard.

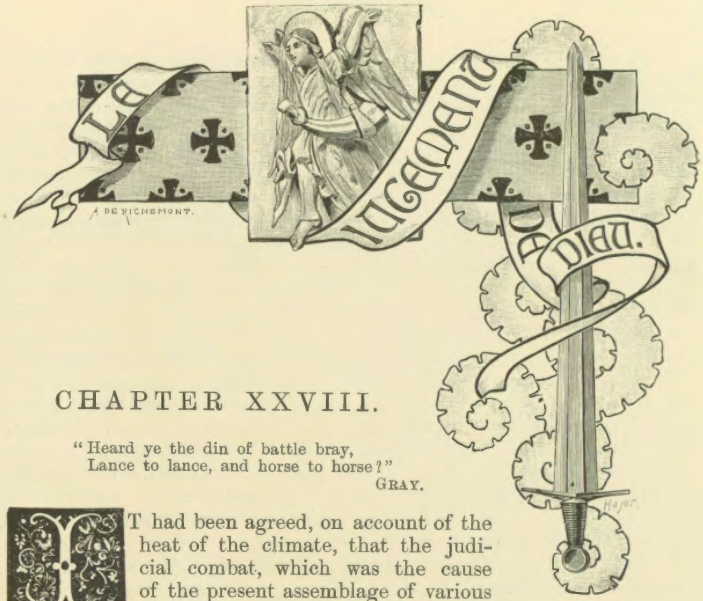
"No more," answered Edith, "than I would have required him to expose his life by an action in which there was more madness than honour."

"Maidens talk ever thus," said the King; "but when the favoured lover presses his suit, she says, with a sigh, her stars had decreed otherwise."

"Your Grace has now, for the second time, threatened me with the influence of my horoscope," Edith replied, with dignity. "Trust me, my liege, whatever be the power of the stars, your poor kinswoman will never wed either infidel or obscure adventurer. Permit me that I listen to the music of Blondel, for the tone of your royal admonitions is scarce so grateful to the ear."

The conclusion of the evening offered nothing worthy of notice.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Heard ye the din of battle bray,
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?"
GRAY.

IT had been agreed, on account of the heat of the climate, that the judicial combat, which was the cause of the present assemblage of various nations at the Diamond of the Desert, should take place at one hour after sunrise. The wide lists, which had been constructed under the inspection of the Knight of the Leopard, enclosed a space of hard sand, which was one hundred and twenty yards long by forty in width. They extended in length from north to south, so as to give both parties the equal advantage of the rising sun. Saladin's royal seat was erected on the western side of the enclosure, just in the centre, where the combatants were expected to meet in mid encounter. Opposed to this was a gallery with closed casements, so contrived that the ladies, for whose accommodation it was erected, might see the fight without being themselves exposed to view. At either extremity of the lists was a barrier, which could be opened or shut at pleasure. Thrones had been also erected, but the Archduke, perceiving that his was lower than King Richard's, refused to occupy it; and Cœur de Lion, who would have submitted to much ere any formality should have interfered with the combat, readily agreed that the sponsors, as they were called, should remain on horseback during the fight. At one extremity of the lists were placed the followers of Richard, and opposed to them were those who accompanied the defender, Conrade. Around the throne destined for the Soldan were ranged his splendid Georgian Guards, and the rest of the enclosure was occupied by Christian and Mahommedan spectators.

Long before daybreak, the lists were surrounded by even a larger number of Saracens than Richard had seen on the preceding evening. When the first ray of the sun's glorious orb arose above the desert, the sonorous call, "To prayer—to prayer!" was poured forth by the Soldan himself, and answered by others, whose rank and zeal entitled them to act as muezzins. It was a striking spectacle to see them all sink to earth, for the purpose of repeating their devotions, with their faces turned to Mecca. But when they arose from the ground, the sun's rays, now strengthening fast, seemed to confirm the Lord of Gilsland's conjecture of the night before. They were flashed back from many a spear-head, for the pointless lances of the preceding day were certainly no longer such. De Vaux pointed it out to his master, who answered with impatience, that he had perfect confidence in the good faith of the Soldan, but if De Vaux was afraid of his bulky body he might retire.

Soon after this the noise of timbrels was heard, at the sound of which the whole Saracen cavaliers threw themselves from their horses, and prostrated themselves, as if for a second morning prayer. This was to give an opportunity to the Queen, with Edith and her attendants, to pass from the pavilion to the gallery intended for them. Fifty guards of Saladin's seraglio escorted them, with naked sabres, whose orders were, to cut to pieces whomsoever, were he prince or peasant, should venture to gaze on the ladies as they passed, or even presume to raise his head until the cessation of the music should make all men aware that they were lodged in their gallery, not to be gazed on by the curious eye.

This superstitious observance of Oriental reverence to the fair sex called forth from Queen Berengaria some criticisms very unfavourable to Saladin and his country. But their den, as the royal fair called it, being securely closed and guarded by their sable attendants, she was under the necessity of contenting herself with seeing, and laying aside for the present the still more exquisite pleasure of being seen.

Meantime the sponsors of both champions went, as was their duty, to see that they were duly armed, and prepared for combat. The Archduke of Austria was in no hurry to perform this part of the ceremony, having had rather an unusually severe debauch upon wine of Schiraz the preceding evening. But the Grand Master of the Temple, more deeply concerned in the event of the combat, was early before the tent of Conrade of Montserrat. To his great surprise, the attendants refused him admittance.

"Do you not know me, ye knaves?" said the Grand Master in great anger.

"We do, most valiant and reverend," answered Conrade's squire; "but even *you* may not at present enter—the Marquis is about to confess himself."

"Confess himself!" exclaimed the Templar, in a tone where alarm mingled with surprise and scorn—"and to whom, I pray thee?"

"My master bid me be secret," said the squire; on which the Grand Master pushed past him, and entered the tent almost by force.

The Marquis of Montserrat was kneeling at the feet of the Hermit of Engaddi, and in the act of beginning his confession.

"What means this, Marquis?" said the Grand Master; "up, for shame—or, if you must needs confess, am not I here?"

"I have confessed to you too often already," replied Conrade, with a pale cheek and a faltering voice. "For God's sake, Grand Master, begone, and let me unfold my conscience to this holy man."

"In what is he holier than I am?" said the Grand Master. "Hermit, prophet, madman—say, if thou darest, in what thou excellest me?"

"Bold and bad man," replied the Hermit, "know that I am like the latticed window, and the divine light passes through to avail others, though, alas! it helpeth not me. Thou art like the iron stanchions, which neither receive light themselves, nor communicate it to any one."

"Prate not to me, but depart from this tent," said the Grand Master; "the Marquis shall not confess this morning, unless it be to me, for I part not from his side."

"Is this *your* pleasure?" said the Hermit to Conrade; "for think not I will obey that proud man, if you continue to desire my assistance."

"Alas," said Conrade, irresolutely, "what would you have me say? Farewell for a while—we will speak anon."

"Oh, procrastination!" exclaimed the Hermit, "thou art a soul-murderer! Unhappy man, farewell—not for a while, but until we shall both meet—no matter where. And for thee," he added, turning to the Grand Master, "TREMBLE!"

"Tremble!" replied the Templar, contemptuously; "I cannot if I would."

The Hermit heard not his answer, having left the tent.

"Come! to this gear hastily," said the Grand Master, "since thou wilt needs go through the foolery. Hark thee, I think I know most of thy frailties by heart, so we may omit the detail, which may be somewhat a long one, and begin with the absolution. What signifies counting the spots of dirt that we are about to wash from our hands?"

"Knowing what thou art thyself," said Conrade, "it is blasphemous to speak of pardoning another."

"That is not according to the canon, Lord Marquis," said the Templar; "thou art more scrupulous than orthodox. The absolution of the wicked priest is as effectual as if he were himself a saint; otherwise, God help the poor penitent! What wounded man enquires whether the surgeon that tents his gashes have clean hands or no? Come, shall we to this toy?"

"No," said Conrade, "I will rather die unconfessed than mock the sacrament."

"Come, noble Marquis," said the Templar, "rouse up your courage, and speak not thus. In an hour's time thou shalt stand victorious in the lists, or confess thee in thy helmet like a valiant knight."

"Alas, Grand Master," answered Conrade, "all augurs ill for this affair. The strange discovery by the instinct of a dog, the revival of this Scottish knight, who comes into the lists like a spectre—all betokens evil."

"Pshaw," said the Templar, "I have seen thee bend thy lance boldly against him in sport, and with equal chance of success. Think thou art but in a tournament, and who bears him better in the tiltyard than thou? Come, squires and armourers, your master must be accoutred for the field."

The attendants entered accordingly, and began to arm the Marquis.

"What morning is without?" said Conrade.

"The sun rises dimly," answered a squire.

"Thou seest, Grand Master," said Conrade, "nought smiles on us."

"Thou wilt fight the more coolly, my son," answered the Templar; "thank Heaven, that hath tempered the sun of Palestine to suit thine occasion."

Thus jested the Grand Master; but his jests had lost their influence on the harassed mind of the Marquis, and notwithstanding his attempts to seem gay, his gloom communicated itself to the Templar.

"This craven," he thought, "will lose the day in pure faintness and cowardice of heart, which he calls tender conscience. I, whom visions and auguries shake not, who am firm in my purpose as the living rock—I should have fought the combat myself. Would to God the Scot may strike him dead on the spot—it were next best to his winning the victory. But come what will, he must have no other confessor than myself; our sins are too much in common, and he might confess my share with his own."

While these thoughts passed through his mind, he continued to assist the Marquis in arming, but it was in silence.

The hour at length arrived, the trumpets sounded, the knights rode into the lists armed at all points, and mounted like men who were to do battle for a kingdom's honour. They wore their visors up, and riding around the lists three times, showed themselves to the spectators. Both were goodly persons, and both had noble countenances. But there was an air of manly confidence on the brow of the Scot, a radiancy of hope, which amounted even to cheerfulness, while, although pride and effort had recalled much of Conrade's natural courage, there lowered still on his brow a cloud of ominous despondence. Even his steed seemed to tread less lightly and blithely to the trumpet-sound than the noble Arab which was bestrode by Sir Kenneth; and the *spruch-sprecher* shook his head while he observed, that while the challenger rode

around the lists in the course of the sun, that is, from right to left, the defender made the same circuit *widdersins*, that is, from left to right, which is in most countries held ominous.

A temporary altar was erected just beneath the gallery occupied by the Queen, and beside it stood the Hermit in the dress of his order, as a Carmelite friar. Other churchmen were also present. To this altar the challenger and defender were successively brought forward, conducted by their respective sponsors. Dismounting before it, each knight avouched the justice of his cause by a solemn oath on the Evangelists, and prayed that his success might be according to the truth or falsehood of what he then swore. They also made oath that they came to do battle in knightly guise, and with the usual weapons, disclaiming the use of spells, charms, or magical devices, to incline victory to their side. The challenger pronounced his vow with a firm and manly voice, and a bold and cheerful countenance. When the ceremony was finished, the Scottish knight looked at the gallery, and bent his head to the earth, as if in honour of those invisible beauties which were enclosed within; then, loaded with armour as he was, sprung to the saddle without the use of the stirrup, and made his courser carry him in a succession of caracoles to his station at the eastern extremity of the lists. Conrade also presented himself before the altar with boldness enough; but his voice, as he took the oath, sounded hollow, as if drowned in his helmet. The lips with which he appealed to Heaven to adjudge victory to the just quarrel, grew white as they uttered the impious mockery. As he turned to remount his horse, the Grand Master approached him closer, as if to rectify something about the sitting of his gorget, and whispered, "Coward and fool! recall thy senses, and do me this battle bravely, else by Heaven, shouldst thou escape him, thou escapest not *me!*"

The savage tone in which this was whispered, perhaps completed the confusion of the Marquis's nerves, for he stumbled as he made to horse; and though he recovered his feet, sprung to the saddle with his usual agility, and displayed his address in horsemanship as he assumed his position opposite to the challenger's, yet the accident did not escape those who were on the watch for omens, which might predict the fate of the day.

The priests, after a solemn prayer that God would show the rightful quarrel, departed from the lists. The trumpets of the challenger then rung a flourish, and a herald-at-arms proclaimed at the eastern end of the lists—"Here stands a good knight, Sir Kenneth of Scotland, champion for the royal King Richard of England, who accuseth Conrade, Marquis of Montserrat, of foul treason and dishonour done to the said King."

When the words Kenneth of Scotland announced the name and character of the champion, hitherto scarce generally known, a loud and cheerful acclaim burst from the followers of King Richard, and hardly, notwithstanding repeated commands of silence, suffered the reply of

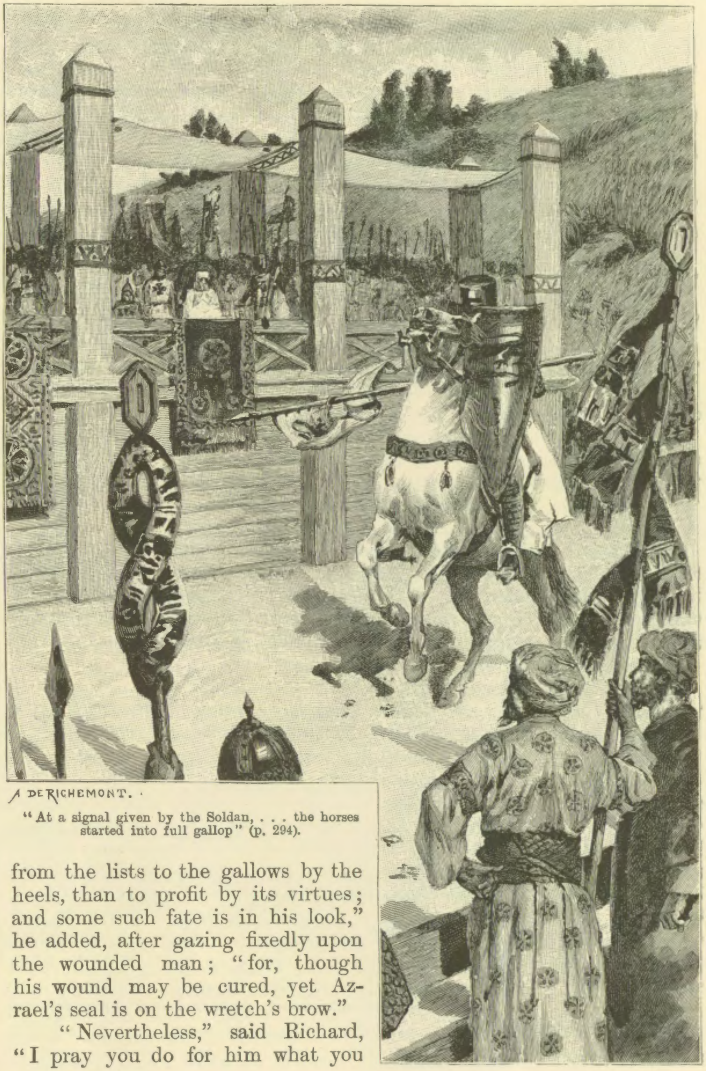
the defendant to be heard. He, of course, avouched his innocence, and offered his body for battle. The esquires of the combatants now approached, and delivered to each his shield and lance, assisting to hang the former around his neck, that his two hands might remain free, one for the management of the bridle, the other to direct the lance.

The shield of the Scot displayed his old bearing, the leopard, but with the addition of a collar and broken chain, in allusion to his late captivity. The shield of the Marquis bore, in reference to his title, a serrated and rocky mountain. Each shook his lance aloft, as if to ascertain the weight and toughness of the unwieldy weapon, and then laid it in the rest. The sponsors, heralds, and squires now retired to the barriers, and the combatants sat opposite to each other, face to face, with couched lance and closed visor, the human form so completely enclosed, that they looked more like statues of molten iron than beings of flesh and blood. The silence of suspense was now general—men breathed thicker, and their very souls seemed seated in their eyes, while not a sound was to be heard save the snorting and pawing of the good steeds, who, sensible of what was about to happen, were impatient to dash into career. They stood thus for perhaps three minutes, when, at a signal given by the Soldan, an hundred instruments rent the air with their brazen clamours, and each champion striking his horse with the spurs, and slacking the rein, the horses started into full gallop, and the knights met in mid space with a shock like a thunderbolt. The victory was not in doubt—no, not one moment. Conrade, indeed, showed himself a practised warrior; for he struck his antagonist knightly in the midst of his shield, bearing his lance so straight and true, that it shivered into splinters from the steel spear-head up to the very gauntlet. The horse of Sir Kenneth recoiled two or three yards and fell on his haunches, but the rider easily raised him with hand and rein. But for Conrade there was no recovery. Sir Kenneth's lance had pierced through the shield, through a plated corselet of Milan steel, through a *secret*, or coat of linked mail, worn beneath the corselet, had wounded him deep in the bosom, and borne him from his saddle, leaving the truncheon of the lance fixed in his wound. The sponsors, heralds, and Saladin himself, descending from his throne, crowded around the wounded man; while Sir Kenneth, who had drawn his sword ere yet he discovered his antagonist was totally helpless, now commanded him to avow his guilt. The helmet was hastily unclosed, and the wounded man, gazing wildly on the skies, replied,—"What would you more! God hath decided justly—I am guilty—but there are worse traitors in the camp than I. In pity to my soul, let me have a confessor!"

He revived as he uttered these words.

"The talisman—the powerful remedy, royal brother!" said King Richard to Saladin.

"The traitor," answered the Soldan, "is more fit to be dragged



"At a signal given by the Soldan, . . . the horses started into full gallop" (p. 294).

from the lists to the gallows by the heels, than to profit by its virtues; and some such fate is in his look," he added, after gazing fixedly upon the wounded man; "for, though his wound may be cured, yet Azrael's seal is on the wretch's brow."

"Nevertheless," said Richard, "I pray you do for him what you

may, that he may at least have time for confession. Slay not soul and body! To him one half hour of time may be worth more, by ten thousand fold, than the life of the oldest patriarch."

"My royal brother's wish shall be obeyed," said Saladin. "Slaves, bear this wounded man to our tent."

"Do not so," said the Templar, who had hitherto stood gloomily looking on in silence. "The royal Duke of Austria and myself will not permit this unhappy Christian Prince to be delivered over to the Saracens, that they may try their spells upon him. We are his sponsors, and demand that he be assigned to our care."

"That is, you refuse the certain means offered to recover him?" said Richard.

"Not so," said the Grand Master, recollecting himself. "If the Soldan useth lawful medicines, he may attend the patient in my tent."

"Do so, I pray thee, good brother," said Richard to Saladin, "though the permission be ungraciously yielded. But now to a more glorious work. Sound, trumpets—shout, England—in honour of England's champion!"

Drum, clarion, trumpet, and cymbal rung forth at once, and the deep and regular shout which for ages has been the English acclamation, sounded amidst the shrill and irregular yells of the Arabs, like the diapason of the organ amid the howling of a storm. There was silence at length.

"Brave Knight of the Leopard," resumed Cœur de Lion, "thou hast shown that the Ethiopian *may* change his skin, and the leopard his spots, though clerks quote Scripture for the impossibility. Yet I have more to say to you when I have conducted you to the presence of the ladies, the best judges, and best rewarders, of deeds of chivalry."

The Knight of the Leopard bowed assent.

"And thou, princely Saladin, wilt also attend them. I promise thee our Queen will not think herself welcome, if she lacks the opportunity to thank her royal host for her most princely reception."

Saladin bent his head gracefully, but declined the invitation.

"I must attend the wounded man," he said. "The leech leaves not his patient more than the champion the lists, even if he be summoned to a bower like those of Paradise. And farther, royal Richard, know that the blood of the East flows not so temperately in the presence of beauty, as that of your land. What saith the Book itself? 'Her eye is as the edge of the sword of the Prophet, who shall look upon it?' He that would not be burnt avoideth to tread on hot embers—wise men spread not the flax before a bickering torch. He, saith the sage, who hath forfeited a treasure, doth not wisely to turn back his head to gaze at it."

Richard, it may be believed, respected the motives of delicacy which flowed from manners so different from his own, and urged his request no farther.

"At noon," said the Soldan, as he departed, "I trust ye will all accept a collation under the black camel-skin tent of a chief of Curdistan."

The same invitation was circulated among the Christians, comprehending all those of sufficient importance to be admitted to sit at a feast made for princes.

"Hark!" said Richard, "the timbrels announce that our Queen and her attendants are leaving their gallery—and see, the turbans sink on the ground, as if struck down by a destroying angel. All lie prostrate, as if the glance of an Arab's eye could sully the lustre of a lady's cheek! Come, we will to the pavilion, and lead our conqueror thither in triumph. How I pity that noble Soldan, who knows but of love as it is known to those of inferior nature!"

Blondel tuned his harp to its boldest measure, to welcome the introduction of the victor into the pavilion of Queen Berengaria. He entered, supported on either side by his sponsors, Richard and Thomas Longsword, and knelt gracefully down before the Queen, though more than half the homage was silently rendered to Edith, who sat on her right hand.

"Unarm him, my mistresses," said the King, whose delight was in the execution of such chivalrous usages. "Let Beauty honour Chivalry! Undo his spurs, Berengaria; Queen though thou be, thou owest him what marks of favour thou canst give. Unlace his helmet, Edith—by this hand thou shalt, wert thou the proudest Plantagenet of the line, and he the poorest knight on earth!"

Both ladies obeyed the royal commands—Berengaria with bustling assiduity, as anxious to gratify her husband's humour, and Edith blushing and growing pale alternately, as slowly and awkwardly she undid, with Longsword's assistance, the fastenings which secured the helmet to the gorget.

"And what expect you from beneath this iron shell?" said Richard, as the removal of the casque gave to view the noble countenance of Sir Kenneth, his face glowing with recent exertion, and not less so with present emotion. "What think ye of him, gallants and beauties?" said Richard. "Doth he resemble an Ethiopian slave, or doth he present the face of an obscure and nameless adventurer? No, by my good sword! Here terminate his various disguises. He hath knelt down before you unknown save by his worth—he arises, equally distinguished by birth and by fortune. The adventurous knight, Kenneth, arises David Earl of Huntingdon, Prince Royal of Scotland!"

There was a general exclamation of surprise, and Edith dropped from her hand the helmet, which she had just received.

"Yes, my masters," said the King, "it is even so. Ye know how Scotland deceived us when she proposed to send this valiant Earl, with a bold company of her best and noblest, to aid our arms in this conquest of Palestine, but failed to comply with her engagements. This noble

youth, under whom the Scottish Crusaders were to have been arrayed, thought foul scorn that his arm should be withheld from the holy warfare, and joined us at Sicily with a small train of devoted and faithful attendants, which was augmented by many of his countrymen to whom the rank of their leader was unknown. The confidants of the Royal Prince had all, save one old follower, fallen by death, when his secret, but too well kept, had nearly occasioned my cutting off, in a Scottish adventurer, one of the noblest hopes of Europe. Why did you not mention your rank, noble Huntingdon, when endangered by my hasty and passionate sentence? Was it that you thought Richard capable of abusing the advantage I possessed over the heir of a King whom I have so often found hostile?"

"I did you not that injustice, royal Richard," answered the Earl of Huntingdon; "but my pride brooked not that I should avow myself Prince of Scotland in order to save my life, endangered for default of loyalty. And, moreover, I had made my vow to preserve my rank unknown till the Crusade should be accomplished; nor did I mention it save *in articulo mortis*, and under the seal of confession, to yonder reverend hermit."

"It was the knowledge of that secret, then, which made the good man so urgent with me to recall my severe sentence?" said Richard. "Well did he say, that, had this good knight fallen by my mandate, I should have wished the deed undone though it had cost me a limb. A limb! I should have wished it undone had it cost me my life—since the world would have said that Richard had abused the condition in which the heir of Scotland had placed himself by his confidence in his generosity."

"Yet, may we know of your Grace by what strange and happy chance this riddle was at length read?" said the Queen Berengaria.

"Letters were brought to us from England," said the King, "in which we learnt, among other unpleasant news, that the King of Scotland had seized upon three of our nobles, when on a pilgrimage to Saint Ninian, and alleged as a cause, that his heir, being supposed to be fighting in the ranks of the Teutonic Knights, against the heathen of Borussia, was, in fact, in our camp, and in our power; and, therefore, William proposed to hold these nobles as hostages for his safety. This gave me the first light on the real rank of the Knight of the Leopard, and my suspicions were confirmed by De Vaux, who, on his return from Ascalon, brought back with him the Earl of Huntingdon's sole attendant, a thick-skulled slave, who had gone thirty miles to unfold to De Vaux a secret he should have told to me."

"Old Strauchan must be excused," said the Lord of Gilsland. "He knew from experience that my heart is somewhat softer than if I wrote myself Plantagenet."

"Thy heart soft? thou commodity of old iron and Cumberland flint, that thou art!" exclaimed the King. "It is we Plantagenets

who boast soft and feeling hearts. Edith," turning to his cousin, with an expression which called the blood into her cheek, "give me thy hand, my fair cousin, and, Prince of Scotland, thine."

"Forbear, my lord," said Edith, hanging back, and endeavouring to hide her confusion under an attempt to rally her royal kinsman's credulity. "Remember you not that my hand was to be the signal of converting to the Christian faith the Saracen and Arab, Saladin and all his turbaned host?"

"Ay, but the wind of prophecy hath chopped about, and sits now in another corner," replied Richard.

"Mock not, lest your bonds be made strong," said the Hermit, stepping forward. "The heavenly host write nothing but truth in their brilliant records—it is man's eyes which are too weak to read their characters aright. Know, that when Saladin and Kenneth of Scotland slept in my grotto, I read in the stars that there rested under my roof a prince, the natural foe of Richard, with whom the fate of Edith Plantagenet was to be united. Could I doubt that this must be the Soldan, whose rank was well known to me, as he often visited my cell to converse on the revolutions of the heavenly bodies? Again, the lights of the firmament proclaimed that this Prince, the husband of Edith Plantagenet, should be a Christian; and I—weak and wild interpreter!—argued thence the conversion of the noble Saladin, whose good qualities seemed often to incline him towards the better faith. The sense of my weakness hath humbled me to the dust, but in the dust I have found comfort! I have not read aright the fate of others—who can assure me but that I may have miscalculated mine own? God will not have us break into His council-house, or spy out His hidden mysteries. We must wait His time with watching and prayer—with fear and with hope. I came hither the stern seer—the proud prophet—skilled, as I thought, to instruct princes, and gifted even with supernatural powers, but burdened with a weight which I deemed no shoulders but mine could have borne. But my bands have been broken! I go hence humble in mine ignorance, penitent—and not hopeless."

With these words he withdrew from the assembly; and it is recorded, that, from that period, his frenzy fits seldom occurred, and his penances were of a milder character, and accompanied with better hopes of the future. So much is there of self-opinion, even in insanity, that the conviction of his having entertained and expressed an unfounded prediction with so much vehemence, seemed to operate like loss of blood on the human frame, to modify and lower the fever of the brain.

It is needless to follow into farther particulars the conferences at the royal tent, or to enquire whether David, Earl of Huntingdon, was as mute in the presence of Edith Plantagenet, as when he was bound to act under the character of an obscure and nameless adventurer. It may be well believed that he there expressed, with suitable earnestness,

the passion to which he had so often before found it difficult to give words.

The hour of noon now approached, and Saladin waited to receive the Princes of Christendom in a tent, which, but for its large size, differed little from that of the ordinary shelter of the common Curdman, or Arab; yet, beneath its ample and sable covering, was prepared a banquet after the most gorgeous fashion of the East, extended upon carpets of the richest stuffs, with cushions laid for the guests. But we cannot stop to describe the cloth of gold and silver, the superb embroidery in Arabesque, the shawls of Caschmere, and the muslins of India, which were here unfolded in all their splendour; far less to tell the different sweetmeats, ragouts edged with rice coloured in various manners, with all the other niceties of Eastern cookery. Lambs roasted whole, and game and poultry dressed in pilaus, were piled in vessels of gold, and silver, and porcelain, and intermixed with large mazers of sherbet, cooled in snow and ice from the caverns of Mount Lebanon. A magnificent pile of cushions at the head of the banquet, seemed prepared for the master of the feast, and such dignitaries as he might call to share that place of distinction, while, from the roof of the tent in all quarters, but over this seat of eminence in particular, waved many a banner and pennon, the trophies of battles won, and kingdoms overthrown. But amongst and above them all, a long lance displayed a shroud, the banner of Death, with this impressive inscription—"SALADIN, KING OF KINGS—SALADIN, VICTOR OF VICTORS—SALADIN MUST DIE." Amid these preparations, the slaves who had arranged the refreshments stood with drooped heads and folded arms, mute and motionless as monumental statuary, or as automata, which waited the touch of the artist to put them in motion.

Expecting the approach of his princely guests, the Soldan, imbued, as most were, with the superstitions of his time, paused over a horoscope and corresponding scroll, which had been sent to him by the Hermit of Engaddi when he departed from the camp.

"Strange and mysterious science," he muttered to himself, "which, pretending to draw the curtain of futurity, misleads those whom it seems to guide, and darkens the scene which it pretends to illuminate! Who would not have said that I was that enemy most dangerous to Richard, whose enmity was to be ended by marriage with his kinswoman? Yet it now appears that a union betwixt this gallant Earl and the lady will bring about friendship betwixt Richard and Scotland, an enemy more dangerous than I, as a wild-cat in a chamber is more to be dreaded than a lion in a distant desert. But then," he continued to mutter to himself, "the combination intimates that this husband was to be Christian. Christian?" he repeated after a pause. "That gave the insane fanatic star-gazer hopes that I might renounce my faith! but me, the faithful follower of our Prophet—me it should have undeceived. Lie there, mysterious scroll," he added, thrusting it

under the pile of cushions; "strange are thy bodements and fatal, since, even when true in themselves, they work upon those who attempt to decipher their meaning all the effects of falsehood. How now! what means this intrusion?"

He spoke to the dwarf Nectabanus, who rushed into the tent fearfully agitated, with each strange and disproportioned feature wrenched by horror into still more extravagant ugliness,—his mouth open, his eyes staring, his hands, with their shrivelled and deformed fingers, wildly expanded.

"What now?" said the Soldan sternly.

"*Accipe hoc!*" groaned out the dwarf.

"Ha! sayst thou?" answered Saladin.

"*Accipe hoc!*" replied the panic-struck creature, unconscious, perhaps, that he repeated the same words as before.

"Hence, I am in no vein for foolery," said the Emperor.

"Nor am I further fool," said the dwarf, "than to make my folly help out my wits to earn my bread, poor helpless wretch! Hear, hear me, great Soldan!"

"Nay, if thou hast actual wrong to complain of," said Saladin, "fool or wise, thou art entitled to the ear of a King. Retire hither with me;" and he led him into the inner tent.

Whatever their conference related to, it was soon broken off by the fanfare of the trumpets, announcing the arrival of the various Christian princes, whom Saladin welcomed to his tent with a royal courtesy well becoming their rank and his own; but chiefly, he saluted the young Earl of Huntingdon, and generously congratulated him upon prospects, which seemed to have interfered with and overclouded those which he had himself entertained.

"But think not," said the Soldan, "thou noble youth, that the Prince of Scotland is more welcome to Saladin than was Kenneth to the solitary Ilderim when they met in the desert, or the distressed Ethiop to the Hakim Adonbec. A brave and generous disposition like thine hath a value independent of condition and birth, as the cool draught, which I here proffer thee, is as delicious from an earthen vessel as from a goblet of gold."

The Earl of Huntingdon made a suitable reply, gratefully acknowledging the various important services he had received from the generous Soldan; but when he had pledged Saladin in the bowl of sherbet, which the Soldan had proffered to him, he could not help remarking with a smile, "The brave cavalier, Ilderim, knew not of the formation of ice, but the munificent Soldan cools his sherbet with snow."

"Wouldst thou have an Arab or a Curdman as wise as a Hakim?" said the Soldan. "He who does on a disguise must make the sentiments of his heart and the learning of his head accord with the dress which he assumes. I desired to see how a brave and single-hearted cavalier of

Frangistan would conduct himself in debate with such a chief as I then seemed; and I questioned the truth of a well-known fact, to know by what arguments thou wouldst support thy assertion."

While they were speaking, the Archduke of Austria, who stood a little apart, was struck with the mention of iced sherbet, and took with pleasure and some bluntness the deep goblet, as the Earl of Huntingdon was about to replace it.

"Most delicious!" he exclaimed, after a deep draught, which the heat of the weather, and the feverishness following the debauch of the preceding day, had rendered doubly acceptable. He sighed as he handed the cup to the Grand Master of the Templars. Saladin made a sign to the dwarf, who advanced and pronounced, with a harsh voice, the words *Accipe hoc!* The Templar started, like a steed who sees a lion under a bush beside the pathway; yet instantly recovered, and to hide, perhaps, his confusion, raised the goblet to his lips; but those lips never touched that goblet's rim. The sabre of Saladin left its sheath as lightning leaves the cloud. It was waved in the air, and the head of the Grand Master rolled to the extremity of the tent, while the trunk remained for a second standing, with the goblet still clenched in its grasp, then fell, the liquor mingling with the blood that spurted from the veins.*

There was a general exclamation of treason, and Austria, nearest to whom Saladin stood with the bloody sabre in his hand, started back as if apprehensive that his turn was to come next. Richard and others laid hand on their swords.

"Fear nothing, noble Austria," said Saladin, as composedly as if nothing had happened, "nor you, royal England, be wroth at what you have seen. Not for his manifold treasons; not for the attempt which, as may be vouched by his own squire, he instigated against King Richard's life; not that he pursued the Prince of Scotland and myself in the desert, reducing us to save our lives by the speed of our horses; not that he had stirred up the Maronites to attack us upon this very occasion, had I not brought up unexpectedly so many Arabs as rendered the scheme abortive; not for any or all of these crimes does he now lie there, although each were deserving such a doom; but because, scarce half an hour ere he polluted our presence, as the simoom empoisons the atmosphere, he poniarded his comrade and accomplice, Conrade of Montserrat, lest he should confess the infamous plots in which they had both been engaged."

"How! Conrade murdered? And by the Grand Master, his sponsor and most intimate friend!" exclaimed Richard. "Noble Soldan, I would not doubt thee—yet this must be proved; otherwise——"

"There stands the evidence," said Saladin, pointing to the terrified dwarf. "Alla, who sends the fire-fly to illuminate the night season, can discover secret crimes by the most contemptible means."

* See Note B.

The Soldan proceeded to tell the dwarf's story, which amounted to this. In his foolish curiosity, or, as he partly confessed, with some thoughts of pilfering, Nectabanus had strayed into the tent of Conrade, which had been deserted by his attendants, some of whom had left the encampment to carry the news of his defeat to his brother, and others were availing themselves of the means which Saladin had supplied for revelling. The wounded man slept under the influence of Saladin's wonderful talisman, so that the dwarf had opportunity to pry about at pleasure, until he was frightened into concealment by the sound of a heavy step. He skulked behind a curtain, yet could see the motions, and hear the words, of the Grand Master, who entered, and carefully secured the covering of the pavilion behind him. His victim started from sleep, and it would appear that he instantly suspected the purpose of his old associate, for it was in a tone of alarm that he demanded wherefore he disturbed him?

"I come to confess and to absolve thee," answered the Grand Master.

Of the further speech the terrified dwarf remembered little, save that Conrade implored the Grand Master not to break a wounded reed, and that the Templar struck him to the heart with a Turkish dagger, with the words *accipe hoc*—words which long afterwards haunted the terrified imagination of the concealed witness.

"I verified the tale," said Saladin, "by causing the body to be examined; and I made this unhappy being, whom Alla hath made the discoverer of the crime, repeat in your own presence the words which the murderer spoke; and you yourselves saw the effect which they produced upon his conscience."

The Soldan paused, and the King of England broke silence:—

"If this be true, as I doubt not, we have witnessed a great act of justice, though it bore a different aspect. But wherefore in this presence? wherefore with thine own hand?"

"I had designed otherwise," said Saladin; "but had I not hastened his doom, it had been altogether averted, since, if I had permitted him to taste of my cup, as he was about to do, how could I, without incurring the brand of inhospitality, have done him to death as he deserved? Had he murdered my father, and afterwards partaken of my food and my bowl, not a hair of his head could have been injured by me. But enough of him—let his carcass and his memory be removed from amongst us."

The body was carried away, and the marks of the slaughter obliterated or concealed with such ready dexterity, as showed that the case was not altogether so uncommon as to paralyse the assistants and officers of Saladin's household.

But the Christian princes felt that the scene which they had beheld weighed heavily on their spirits, and although, at the courteous invitation of the Soldan, they assumed their seats at the banquet,

yet it was with the silence of doubt and amazement. The spirits of Richard alone surmounted all cause for suspicion or embarrassment. Yet he, too, seemed to ruminate on some proposition, as if he were desirous of making it in the most insinuating and acceptable manner which was possible. At length he drank off a large bowl of wine, and, addressing the Soldan, desired to know whether it was not true that he had honoured the Earl of Huntingdon with a personal encounter.

Saladin answered with a smile, that he had proved his horse and his weapons with the heir of Scotland, as cavaliers are wont to do with each other when they meet in the desert—and modestly added, that though the combat was not entirely decisive, he had not, on his part, much reason to pride himself on the event. The Scot, on the other hand, disclaimed the attributed superiority, and wished to assign it to the Soldan.

"Enough of honour thou hast had in the encounter," said Richard, "and I envy thee more for that, than for the smiles of Edith Plantagenet, though one of them might reward a bloody day's work. But what say you, noble princes; is it fitting that such a royal ring of chivalry should break up without something being done for future times to speak of? What is the overthrow and death of a traitor, to such a fair garland of honour as is here assembled, and which ought not to part without witnessing something more worthy of their regard? How say you, princely Soldan—what if we two should now, and before this fair company, decide the long-contended question for this land of Palestine, and end at once these tedious wars? Yonder are the lists ready, nor can Paynimrie ever hope a better champion than thou. I, unless worthier offers, will lay down my gauntlet in behalf of Christendom, and, in all love and honour, we will do mortal battle for the possession of Jerusalem."

There was a deep pause for the Soldan's answer. His cheek and brow coloured highly, and it was the opinion of many present that he hesitated whether he should accept the challenge. At length he said, "Fighting for the Holy City against those whom we regard as idolaters, and worshippers of stocks and stones, and graven images, I might confide that Alla would strengthen my arm; or if I fell beneath the sword of the Melech Ric, I could not pass to paradise by a more glorious death. But Alla has already given Jerusalem to the true believers, and it were a tempting the God of the Prophet to peril, upon my own personal strength and skill, that which I hold securely by the superiority of my forces."

"If not for Jerusalem, then," said Richard, in the tone of one who would entreat a favour of an intimate friend, "yet, for the love of honour, let us run at least three courses with grinded lances?"

"Even this," said Saladin, half smiling at Cœur de Lion's affectionate earnestness for the combat, "even this I may not lawfully do. The master places the shepherd over the flock, not for the shepherd's

own sake, but for the sake of the sheep. Had I a son to hold the sceptre when I fell, I might have had the liberty, as I have the will, to brave this bold encounter; but your own Scripture sayeth, that when the herdsman is smitten, the sheep are scattered."

"Thou hast had all the fortune," said Richard, turning to the Earl of Huntingdon with a sigh. "I would have given the best year in my life for that one half hour beside the Diamond of the Desert!"

The chivalrous extravagance of Richard awakened the spirits of the assembly, and when at length they arose to depart, Saladin advanced and took Cœur de Lion by the hand.

"Noble King of England," he said, "we now part never to meet again. That your league is dissolved, no more to be reunited, and that your native forces are far too few to enable you to prosecute your enterprise, is as well known to me as to yourself. I may not yield you up that Jerusalem which you so much desire to hold. It is to us, as to you, a Holy City. But whatever other terms Richard demands of Saladin, shall be as willingly yielded as yonder fountain yields its waters. Ay, and the same should be as frankly afforded by Saladin, if Richard stood in the desert with but two archers in his train!"

The next day saw Richard's return to his own camp, and in a short space afterwards, the young Earl of Huntingdon was espoused by Edith Plantagenet. The Soldan sent, as a nuptial present on this occasion, the celebrated TALISMAN; but though many cures were wrought by means of it in Europe, none equalled in success and celebrity those which the Soldan achieved. It is still in existence, having been bequeathed by the Earl of Huntingdon to a brave knight of Scotland, Sir Simon of the Lee, in whose ancient and highly honoured family it is still preserved; and although charmed stones have been dismissed from the modern Pharmacopœia, its virtues are still applied to for stopping blood, and in cases of canine madness.

Our story closes here, as the terms on which Richard relinquished his conquests are to be found in every history of the period.

NOTES.

NOTE A, p. 69.—SIR THOMAS MULTON OF GILSLAND.

He was a historical hero, faithfully attached, as is here expressed, to King Richard, and is noticed with distinction in the romance mentioned in the Introduction. At the beginning of the romance, mention is made of a tournament, in which the king returns three times with a fresh suit of armour, which acted as a disguise; and at each appearance, some knight of great prowess had a sharp encounter with him. When Richard returned the second time, the following is Mr. Ellis's account of his proceedings:—"He now mounted a bay horse, assumed a suit of armour painted red, and a helmet, the crest of which was a red hound, with a long tail which reached to the earth; an emblem intended to convey his indignation against the heathen hounds who defiled the Holy Land, and his determination to attempt their destruction. Having sufficiently signalised himself in his new disguise, he rode into the ranks for the purpose of selecting a more formidable adversary; and, delivering his spear to his squire, took his mace, and assaulted Sir Thomas de Multon, a knight whose prowess was deservedly held in the highest estimation. Sir Thomas, apparently not at all disordered by a blow which would have felled a common adversary, calmly advised him to go and amuse himself elsewhere; but Richard, having aimed at him a second and more violent stroke, by which his helmet was nearly crushed, he returned it with such vigour that the king lost his stirrups, and, recovering himself with some difficulty rode off with all speed into the forest."—ELLIS'S *Specimens*, pp. 193, 194.

NOTE B, p. 302.—

The manner of the death of the supposed Grand Master of the Templars was taken from the real tragedy enacted by Saladin upon the person of Arnold or Reginald de Chatillon. This person, a soldier of fortune, had seized a castle on the verge of the desert, from whence he made plundering excursions, and insulted and abused the pilgrims who were on their journey to Mecca. It was chiefly on his account that Saladin declared war against Guy de Lusignan, the last Latin King of the Holy Land. The Christian monarch was defeated by Saladin with the loss of 30,000 men, and having been made prisoner, with Chatillon and others, was conducted before the Soldan. The victor presented to his exhausted captive a cup of sherbet, cooled in snow. Lusignan, having drunk, was about to hand the cup to Chatillon, when the Soldan interfered. "Your person," he said, "my royal prisoner, is sacred, but the cup of Saladin must not be profaned by a blasphemous robber and ruffian." So saying, he slew the captive knight by a blow of his scimitar.—See GIBBON'S *History*.

NOTE C, p. 305. THE LEE PENNY.

Since the last sheet of "the Talisman" was printed off, a kind friend has transmitted the following curious document, by which it would appear that the

alleged virtues of the Lee Penny had at one time given uneasiness to our Presbyterian brethren of Clydesdale.

(Copy)

Extract from the Assemblie Books at Glasgow, anent the Lee Penny stone.

Apud Glasgow, 21 *of October*.*

SYNOD. SESS. 2.

QUHILK day, amongst the referries of the Brethren of the Ministry of Lanark, it was proponed to the Synod that Gavin Hamilton of Raploch had pursueit an Complaint before them against Sir James Lockhart of Lee, anent the superstitious using of an Stone, set in silver, for the curing of deseased Cattle, q^lk^ the said Gavin affirmed could not be lawfully usit, and that they had deferrit to give ony decisionne thairin till the advice of the Assemblie might be had concerning the same. The Assemblie having inquirit of the manner of using thereof, and particularly understood, be examination of the said Laird of Lee and otherwise, that the custom is only to cast the stone in some water, and give the deseasit Cattle thereof to drink, and that the same is done without using any words, such as Charmers and Sorcereirs use in thair unlawful practices; and considering that in nature thair are many things seen to work strange effects, whereof no human wit can give a reason, it having pleast God to give to stones and herbs a speciall vertue for healing of many infirmities in man and beast, advises the Brethren to surcease thair process, as therein they perceive no ground of Offence, and admonishes the said Laird of Lee, in the using of the said stone, to take heid that it be usit hereafter with the least scandle that possibly maybe. Extract out of the Books of the Assemblie holden at Glasgow, and subscribed at thair command.

M. ROBERT YOUNG, clerk to the Assemblie at Glasgow.

* The year is unfortunately not given; but the Sir James Lockhart named in the extract was born in 1596, and died in 1674.

MY AUNT MARGARET'S MIRROR.

INTRODUCTION.

THE species of publication which has come to be generally known by the title of *Annual*, being a miscellany of prose and verse, equipped with numerous engravings, and put forth every year about Christmas, had flourished for a long while in Germany before it was imitated in this country by an enterprising bookseller, a German by birth, Mr. Ackermann. The rapid success of his work, as is the custom of the time, gave birth to a host of rivals, and, among others, to an Annual styled *The Keepsake*, the first volume of which appeared in 1828, and attracted much notice, chiefly in consequence of the very uncommon splendour of its illustrative accompaniments. The expenditure which the spirited proprietors lavished on this magnificent volume, is understood to have been not less than from ten to twelve thousand pounds sterling!

Various gentlemen of such literary reputation that any one might think it an honour to be associated with them, had been announced as contributors to this Annual, before application was made to me to assist in it; and I accordingly placed with much pleasure at the Editor's disposal a few fragments, originally designed to have been worked into the Chronicles of the Canongate, besides a MS. Drama, the long-neglected performance of my youthful days—"the House of Aspen."

The Keepsake for 1828 included, however, only three of these little prose tales —of which the first in order was that entitled "My Aunt Margaret's Mirror." By way of *introduction* to this, when now included in a general collection of my lucubrations, I have only to say that it is a mere transcript, or at least with very little embellishment, of a story that I remembered being struck with in my childhood, when told at the fireside by a lady of eminent virtues, and no inconsiderable share of talent, one of the ancient and honourable house of Swinton. She was a kind relation of my own, and met her death in a manner so shocking, being killed in a fit of insanity by a female attendant who had been attached to her person for half a lifetime, that I cannot now recall her memory, child as I was when the catastrophe occurred, without a painful reawakening of perhaps the first images of horror that the scenes of real life stamped on my mind.

This good spinster had in her composition a strong vein of the superstitious, and was pleased, among other fancies, to read alone in her chamber by a taper fixed in a candlestick which she had formed out of a human skull. One night this strange piece of furniture acquired suddenly the power of locomotion, and, after

performing some odd circles on her chimneypiece, fairly leaped on the floor, and continued to roll about the apartment. Mrs. Swinton calmly proceeded to the adjoining room for another light, and had the satisfaction to penetrate the mystery on the spot. Rats abounded in the ancient building she inhabited, and one of these had managed to ensconce itself within her favourite *memento mori*. Though thus endowed with a more than feminine share of nerve, she entertained largely that belief in supernaturals, which in those times was not considered as sitting ungracefully on the grave and aged of her condition; and the story of the Magic Mirror was one for which she vouched with particular confidence, alleging indeed that one of her own family had been an eye-witness of the incidents recorded in it.

"I tell the tale as it was told to me."

Stories enow of much the same cast will present themselves to the recollection of such of my readers as have ever dabbled in a species of lore to which I certainly gave more hours, at one period of my life, than I should gain any credit by confessing.

August, 1831.

MY AUNT MARGARET'S MIRROR.

"There are times
When Fancy plays her gambols, in despite
Even of our watchful senses, when in sooth
Substance seems shadow, shadow substance seems,
When the broad, palpable, and marked partition,
'Twixt that which is and is not, seems dissolved,
As if the mental eye gained power to gaze
Beyond the limits of the existing world.
Such hours of shadowy dreams I better love
Than all the gross realities of life."

ANONYMOUS.

MY Aunt Margaret was one of that respected sisterhood upon whom devolve all the trouble and solicitude incidental to the possession of children, excepting only that which attends their entrance into the world. We were a large family of very different dispositions and constitutions. Some were dull and peevish—they were sent to Aunt Margaret to be amused; some were rude, romping, and boisterous—they were sent to Aunt Margaret to be kept quiet, or rather, that their noise might be removed out of hearing: those who were indisposed were sent with the prospect of being nursed: those who were stubborn, with the hope of their being subdued by the kindness of Aunt Margaret's discipline; in short, she had all the various duties of a mother without the credit and dignity of the maternal character. The busy scene of her various cares is now over—of the invalids and the robust, the kind and the rough, the peevish and pleased children, who thronged her little parlour from morning till night, not one remains alive but myself; who, afflicted by early infirmity, was one of the most delicate of her nurslings, yet, nevertheless, have outlived them all.

It is still my custom, and shall be so while I have the use of my limbs, to visit my respected relation at least three times a week. Her abode is about half a mile from the suburbs of the town in which I reside; and is accessible, not only by the high road, from which it stands at some distance, but by means of a greensward footpath, leading through some pretty meadows. I have so little left to torment me in life, that it is one of my greatest vexations to know that several of these sequestered fields have been devoted as sites for building. In that which is nearest the town wheelbarrows have been at work for several weeks in such numbers that I verily believe its whole surface, to the depth of at least eighteen inches, was mounted in these monotrochs at the same moment, and in the act of being transported from one place to another. Huge triangular piles of planks are also reared in different parts of the devoted messuage; and a little group of trees, that still grace the eastern end, which rises in a gentle ascent, have just received warning to quit, expressed by a daub of white paint, and are to give place to a curious grove of chimneys.

It would, perhaps, hurt others in my situation to reflect that this little range of pasturage once belonged to my father (whose family was of some consideration in the world), and was sold by patches to remedy distresses in which he involved himself in an attempt by commercial adventure to redeem his diminished fortune. While the building scheme was in full operation, this circumstance was often pointed out to me by the class of friends who are anxious that no part of your misfortunes should escape your observations. "Such pasture-ground! —lying at the very town's end—in turnips and potatoes; the parks would bring £20 per acre, and if leased for building—Oh, it was a gold mine!—And all sold for an old song out of the ancient possessor's hands!" My comforters cannot bring me to repine much on this subject. If I could be allowed to look back on the past without interruption, I could willingly give up the enjoyment of present income, and the hope of future profit, to those who have purchased what my father sold. I regret the alteration of the ground only because it destroys associations, and I would more willingly (I think) see the Earl's Closes in the hands of strangers, retaining their silvan appearance, than know them for my own, if torn up by agriculture, or covered with buildings. Mine are the sensations of poor Logan:

> "The horrid plough has raised the green
> Where yet a child I strayed;
> The axe has felled the hawthorn screen,
> The schoolboy's summer shade."

I hope, however, the threatened devastation will not be consummated in my day. Although the adventurous spirit of times short while since passed gave rise to the undertaking, I have been encouraged to think that the subsequent changes have so far damped the spirit of speculation, that the rest of the woodland footpath leading to Aunt

Margaret's retreat will be left undisturbed for her time and mine. I am interested in this, for every step of the way, after I have passed through the green already mentioned, has for me something of early remembrance. There is the stile at which I can recollect a cross child's-maid upbraiding me with my infirmity, as she lifted me coarsely and carelessly over the flinty steps, which my brothers traversed with shout and bound. I remember the suppressed bitterness of the moment, and, conscious of my own inferiority, the feeling of envy with which I regarded the easy movements and elastic steps of my more happily formed brethren. Alas! these goodly barks have all perished on life's wide ocean, and only that which seemed so little seaworthy, as the naval phrase goes, has reached the port when the tempest is over. Then there is the pool, where, manœuvring our little navy, constructed out of the broad water-flags, my elder brother fell in, and was scarce saved from the watery element to die under Nelson's banner. There is the hazel copse also, in which my brother Henry used to gather nuts, thinking little that he was to die in an Indian jungle in quest of rupees.

There is so much more of remembrance about the little walk, that —as I stop, rest on my crutch-headed cane, and look round with that species of comparison between the thing I was and that which I now am—it almost induces me to doubt my own identity, until I find myself in face of the honeysuckle porch of Aunt Margaret's dwelling, with its irregularity of front, and its odd projecting latticed windows; where the workmen seem to have made a study that no one of them should resemble another in form, size, or in the old-fashioned stone entablature and labels which adorn them. This tenement, once the manor-house of Earl's Closes, we still retain a slight hold upon; for, in some family arrangements it had been settled upon Aunt Margaret during the term of her life. Upon this frail tenure depends, in a great measure, the last shadow of the family of Bothwell of Earl's Closes and their last slight connection with their paternal inheritance. The only representative will then be an infirm old man, moving not unwillingly to the grave, which has devoured all that were dear to his affections.

When I have indulged such thoughts for a minute or two, I enter the mansion, which is said to have been the gatehouse only of the original building, and find one being on whom time seems to have made little impression; for the Aunt Margaret of to-day bears the same proportional age to the Aunt Margaret of my early youth that the boy of ten years old does to the man of (by'r Lady!) some fifty-six years. The old lady's invariable costume has doubtless some share in confirming one in the opinion that time has stood still with Aunt Margaret.

The brown or chocolate-coloured silk gown, with ruffles of the same stuff at the elbow, within which are others of Mechlin lace, the black silk gloves, or mitts, the white hair combed back upon a roll, and the

cap of spotless cambric, which closes around the venerable countenance, as they were not the custom of 1780, so neither were they that of 1826; they are altogether a style peculiar to the individual Aunt Margaret. There she still sits, as she sat thirty years since, with her wheel or the stocking, which she works by the fire in winter, and by the window in summer; or perhaps venturing as far as the porch in an unusually fine summer evening. Her frame, like some well-constructed piece of mechanics, still performs the operations for which it had seemed destined; going its round with an activity which is gradually diminished, yet indicating no probability that it will soon come to a period.

The solicitude and affection which had made Aunt Margaret the willing slave to the inflictions of a whole nursery, have now for their object the health and comfort of one old and infirm man; the last remaining relative of her family, and the only one who can still find interest in the traditional stores which she hoards; as some miser hides the gold which he desires that no one should enjoy after his death.

My conversation with Aunt Margaret generally relates little either to the present or to the future; for the passing day we possess as much as we require, and we neither of us wish for more; and for that which is to follow we have on this side of the grave neither hopes, nor fears, nor anxiety. We therefore naturally look back to the past, and forget the present fallen fortunes and declined importance of our family in recalling the hours when it was wealthy and prosperous.

With this slight introduction, the reader will know as much of Aunt Margaret and her nephew as is necessary to comprehend the following conversation and narrative.

Last week, when, late in a summer evening, I went to call on the old lady to whom my reader is now introduced, I was received by her with all her usual affection and benignity; while, at the same time, she seemed abstracted and disposed to silence. I asked her the reason. "They have been clearing out the old chapel," she said; "John Clayhudgeons having, it seems, discovered that the stuff within—being, I suppose, the remains of our ancestors—was excellent for top-dressing the meadows."

Here I started up with more alacrity than I have displayed for some years; but sat down while my aunt added, laying her hand upon my sleeve, "The chapel has been long considered as common ground, my dear, and used for a penfold, and what objection can we have to the man for employing what is his own to his own profit? Besides, I did speak to him, and he very readily and civilly promised that, if he found bones or monuments, they should be carefully respected and reinstated; and what more could I ask? So, the first stone they found bore the name of Margaret Bothwell, 1585, and I have caused it to be laid carefully aside, as I think it betokens death; and having served my namesake two hundred years, it has just been cast up in

time to do me the same good turn. My house has been long put in order, as far as the small earthly concerns require it, but who shall say that their account with Heaven is sufficiently revised?"

"After what you have said, aunt," I replied, "perhaps I ought to take my hat and go away; and so I should but that there is on this occasion a little alloy mingled with our devotion. To think of death at all times is a duty; to suppose it nearer, from the finding an old gravestone, is superstition; and you, with your strong useful common sense, which was so long the prop of a fallen family, are the last person whom I should have suspected of such weakness."

"Neither would I have deserved your suspicions, kinsman," answered Aunt Margaret, "if we were speaking of any incident occurring in the actual business of human life. But for all this, I have a sense of superstition about me which I do not wish to part with. It is a feeling which separates me from this age and links me with that to which I am hastening; and even when it seems as now to lead me to the brink of the grave, and bids me gaze on it, I do not love that it should be dispelled. It soothes my imagination, without influencing my reason or conduct."

"I profess, my good lady," replied I, "that had any one but you made such a declaration I should have thought it as capricious as that of the clergyman who, without vindicating his false reading, preferred from habit's sake his old Mumpsimus to the modern Sumpsimus."

"Well," answered my aunt, "I must explain my inconsistency in this particular, by comparing it to another. I am, as you know, a piece of that old-fashioned thing called a Jacobite; but I am so in sentiment and feeling only; for a more loyal subject never joined in prayers for the health and wealth of George the Fourth, whom God long preserve! But I daresay that kind-hearted sovereign would not deem that an old woman did him much injury, if she leaned back in her armchair, just in such a twilight as this, and thought of the high-mettled men, whose sense of duty called them to arms against his grandfather; and how, in a cause which they deemed that of their rightful prince and country—

> "'They fought till their hands to the broadsword was glued,
> They fought against fortune with hearts unsubdued.'

Do not come at such a moment, when my head is full of plaids, pibrochs, and claymores, and ask my reason to admit what, I am afraid, it cannot deny—I mean, that the public advantage peremptorily demanded that these things should cease to exist. I cannot, indeed, refuse to allow the justice of your reasoning; but yet, being convinced against my will, you will gain little by your motion. You might as well read to an infatuated lover the catalogue of his mistress's imperfections; for, when he has been compelled to listen to the summary, you will only get for answer, that, 'he lo'es her a' the better.'"

I was not sorry to have changed the gloomy train of Aunt Margaret's thoughts, and replied in the same tone, "Well, I can't help being persuaded that our good King is the more sure of Mrs. Bothwell's loyal affection, that he has the Stuart right of birth, as well as the Act of Succession in his favour."

"Perhaps my attachment, were its source of consequence, might be found warmer for the union of the rights you mention," said Aunt Margaret; "but, upon my word, it would be as sincere if the King's right were founded only on the will of the nation, as declared at the Revolution. I am none of your *jure divino* folk."

"And a Jacobite nothwithstanding."

"And a Jacobite nothwithstanding; or rather, I will give you leave to call me one of the party which, in Queen Anne's time, were called *Whimsicals*; because they were sometimes operated upon by feelings, sometimes by principle. After all, it is very hard that you will not allow an old woman to be as inconsistent in her political sentiments as mankind in general show themselves in all the various courses of life; since you cannot point out one of them in which the passions and prejudices of those who pursue it are not perpetually carrying us away from the path which our reason points out."

"True, aunt; but you are a wilful wanderer, who should be forced back into the right path."

"Spare me, I entreat you," replied Aunt Margaret. "You remember the Gaelic song, though I daresay I mispronounce the words—

"'Hatil mohatil, na dowski mi.
I am asleep, do not waken me.'

I tell you, kinsman, that the sort of waking dreams which my imagination spins out, in what your favourite Wordsworth calls 'moods of my own mind,' are worth all the rest of my more active days. Then, instead of looking forwards, as I did in youth, and forming for myself fairy palaces upon the verge of the grave, I turn my eyes backward upon the days and manners of my better time; and the sad yet soothing recollections come so close and interesting, that I almost think it sacrilege to be wiser or more rational, or less prejudiced, than those to whom I looked up in my younger years."

"I think I now understand what you mean," I answered, "and can comprehend why you should occasionally prefer the twilight of illusion to the steady light of reason."

"Where there is no task," she rejoined, "to be performed, we may sit in the dark if we like it—if we go to work, we must ring for candles."

"And amidst such shadowy and doubtful light," continued I, "imagination frames her enchanted and enchanting visions, and sometimes passes them upon the senses for reality."

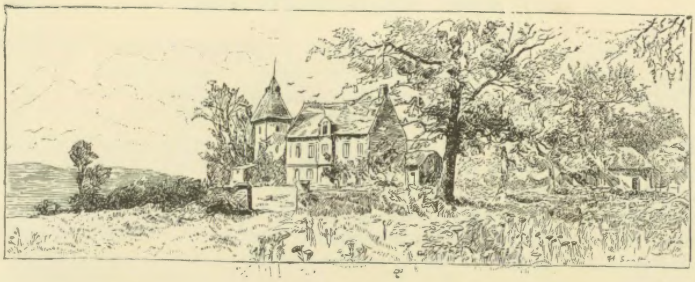
"Yes," said Aunt Margaret, who is a well-read woman, "to those who resemble the translator of Tasso—

> "'Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind
> Believed the magic wonders which he sung.'

It is not required for this purpose that you should be sensible of the painful horrors which an actual belief in such prodigies inflicts; such a belief, nowadays, belongs only to fools and children. It is not necessary that your ears should tingle, and your complexion change, like that of Theodore, at the approach of the spectral huntsman. All that is indispensable for the enjoyment of the milder feeling of supernatural awe is that you should be susceptible of the slight shuddering which creeps over you when you hear a tale of terror—that well-vouched tale which the narrator, having first expressed his general disbelief of all such legendary lore, selects and produces, as having something in it which he has been always obliged to give up as inexplicable. Another symptom is a momentary hesitation to look round you when the interest of the narrative is at the highest; and the third, a desire to avoid looking into a mirror when you are alone, in your chamber for the evening. I mean such are signs which indicate the crisis when a female imagination is in due temperature to enjoy a ghost story. I do not pretend to describe those which express the same disposition in a gentleman."

"This last symptom, dear aunt, of shunning the mirror, seems likely to be a rare occurrence amongst the fair sex."

"You are a novice in toilet fashions, my dear kinsman. All women consult the looking-glass with anxiety before they go into company; but when they return home the mirror has not the same charm. The die has been cast—the party has been successful or unsuccessful, in the impression which she desired to make. But, without going deeper into the mysteries of the dressing-table, I will tell you that I myself, like many other honest folk, do not like to see the blank black front of a large mirror in a room dimly lighted, and where the reflection of the candle seems rather to lose itself in the deep obscurity of the glass than to be reflected back again into the apartment. That space of inky darkness seems to be a field for Fancy to play her revels in. She may call up other features to meet us, instead of the reflection of our own; or, as in the spells of Hallowe'en, which we learned in childhood, some unknown form may be seen peeping over our shoulder. In short, when I am in a ghost-seeing humour, I make my handmaiden draw the green curtains over the mirror before I go into the room, so that she may have the first shock of the apparition, if there be any to be seen. But to tell you the truth, this dislike to look into a mirror in particular times and places has, I believe, its original foundation in a story which came to me by tradition from my grandmother, who was a party concerned in the scene of which I will now tell you."



The Mirror.

CHAPTER I.

YOU are fond (said my aunt) of sketches of the society which has passed away. I wish I could describe to you Sir Philip Forester, the "chartered libertine" of Scottish good company about the end of the last century. I never saw him indeed; but my mother's traditions were full of his wit, gallantry, and dissipation. This gay knight flourished about the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century. He was the Sir Charles Easy and the Lovelace of his day and country: renowned for the number of duels he had fought and the successful intrigues which he had carried on. The supremacy which he had attained in the fashionable world was absolute; and when we combine it with one or two anecdotes, for which, "if laws were made for every degree," he ought certainly to have been hanged, the popularity of such a person really serves to show, either that the present times are much more decent, if not more virtuous, than they formerly were; or, that high breeding then was of more difficult attainment than that which is now so called; and, consequently, entitled the successful professor to a proportional degree of plenary indulgences and privileges. No beau of this day could have borne out so ugly a story as that of Pretty Peggy Grindstone, the miller's daughter at Sillermills—it had well-nigh made work for the Lord Advocate. But it hurt Sir Philip Forester no more than the hail hurts the hearthstone. He was as well received in society as ever, and dined with the Duke of A——the day

the poor girl was buried. She died of heart-break. But that has nothing to do with my story.

Now, you must listen to a single word upon kith, kin, and ally; I promise you I will not be prolix. But it is necessary to the authenticity of my legend that you should know that Sir Philip Forester, with his handsome person, elegant accomplishments, and fashionable manners, married the younger Miss Falconer of King's Copland. The elder sister of this lady had previously become the wife of my grandfather, Sir Geoffrey Bothwell, and brought into our family a good fortune. Miss Jemima, or Miss Jemmie Falconer, as she was usually called, had also about ten thousand pounds sterling—then thought a very handsome portion indeed.

The two sisters were extremely different, though each had her admirers while they remained single. Lady Bothwell had some touch of the old King's Copland blood about her. She was bold, though not to the degree of audacity; ambitious, and desirous to raise her house and family; and was, as has been said, a considerable spur to my grandfather, who was otherwise an indolent man; but whom, unless he has been slandered, his lady's influence involved in some political matters which had been more wisely let alone. She was a woman of high principle, however, and masculine good sense, as some of her letters testify which are still in my wainscot cabinet.

Jemmie Falconer was the reverse of her sister in every respect. Her understanding did not reach above the ordinary pitch, if, indeed, she could be said to have attained it. Her beauty, while it lasted, consisted, in a great measure, of delicacy of complexion and regularity of features, without any peculiar force of expression. Even these charms faded under the sufferings attendant on an ill-sorted match. She was passionately attached to her husband, by whom she was treated with a callous, yet polite indifference, which, to one whose heart was as tender as her judgment was weak, was more painful perhaps than absolute ill usage. Sir Philip was a voluptuary; that is, a completely selfish egotist, whose disposition and character resembled the rapier he wore, polished, keen, and brilliant, but inflexible and unpitying. As he observed carefully all the usual forms towards his lady, he had the art to deprive her even of the compassion of the world; and useless and unavailing as that may be while actually possessed by the sufferer, it is, to a mind like Lady Forester's, most painful to know she has it not.

The tattle of society did its best to place the peccant husband above the suffering wife. Some called her a poor spiritless thing, and declared that with a little of her sister's spirit she might have brought to reason any Sir Philip whatsoever, were it the termagant Falconbridge himself. But the greater part of their acquaintance affected candour, and saw faults on both sides; though, in fact, there only existed the oppressor and the oppressed. The tone of such critics was—"To be sure,

no one will justify Sir Philip Forester, but then we all know Sir Philip, and Jemmie Falconer might have known what she had to expect from the beginning. What made her set her cap at Sir Philip? He would never have looked at her if she had not thrown herself at his head, with her poor ten thousand pounds. I am sure, if it is money he wanted, she spoiled his market. I know where Sir Philip could have done much better. And then, if she *would* have the man, could not she try to make him more comfortable at home, and have his friends oftener, and not plague him with the squalling children, and take care all was handsome and in good style about the house? I declare I think Sir Philip would have made a very domestic man with a woman who knew how to manage him."

Now these fair critics, in raising their profound edifice of domestic felicity, did not recollect that the corner-stone was wanting; and that to receive good company with good cheer the means of the banquet ought to have been furnished by Sir Philip, whose income (dilapidated as it was) was not equal to the display of hospitality required, and, at the same time, to the supply of the good knight's *menus plaisirs*. So, in spite of all that was so sagely suggested by female friends, Sir Philip carried his good-humour everywhere abroad, and left at home a solitary mansion and a pining spouse.

At length, inconvenienced in his money affairs, and tired even of the short time which he spent in his own dull house, Sir Philip Forester determined to take a trip to the Continent, in the capacity of a volunteer. It was then common for men of fashion to do so; and our knight perhaps was of opinion that a touch of the military character, just enough to exalt, but not render pedantic, his qualities as a *beau garçon*, was necessary to maintain possession of the elevated situation which he held in the ranks of fashion.

Sir Philip's resolution threw his wife into agonies of terror, by which the worthy baronet was so much annoyed that, contrary to his wont, he took some trouble to soothe her apprehensions; and once more brought her to shed tears, in which sorrow was not altogether unmingled with pleasure. Lady Bothwell asked, as a favour, Sir Philip's permission to receive her sister and her family into her own house during his absence on the Continent. Sir Philip readily assented to a proposition which saved expense, silenced the foolish people who might have talked of a deserted wife and family, and gratified Lady Bothwell, for whom he felt some respect, as for one who often spoke to him, always with freedom, and sometimes with severity, without being deterred either by his raillery or the *prestige* of his reputation.

A day or two before Sir Philip's departure Lady Bothwell took the liberty of asking him, in her sister's presence, the direct question, which his timid wife had often desired, but never ventured, to put to him.

"Pray, Sir Philip, what route do you take when you reach the Continent?"

"I go from Leith to Helvoet by a packet with advices."

"That I comprehend perfectly," said Lady Bothwell dryly; "but you do not mean to remain long at Helvoet, I presume, and I should like to know what is your next object?"

"You ask me, my dear lady," answered Sir Philip, "a question which I have not dared to ask myself. The answer depends on the fate of war. I shall, of course, go to headquarters, wherever they may happen to be for the time, deliver my letters of introduction, learn as much of the noble heart of war as may suffice a poor interloping amateur, and then take a glance at the sort of thing of which we read so much in the *Gazette*."

"And I trust, Sir Philip," said Lady Bothwell, "that you will remember that you are a husband and a father; and that though you think fit to indulge this military fancy, you will not let it hurry you into dangers which it is certainly unnecessary for any save professional persons to encounter?"

"Lady Bothwell does me too much honour," replied the adventurous knight, "in regarding such a circumstance with the slightest interest. But to soothe your flattering anxiety, I trust your ladyship will recollect that I cannot expose to hazard the venerable and paternal character which you so obligingly recommend to my protection, without putting in some peril an honest fellow, called Philip Forester, with whom I have kept company for thirty years, and with whom, though some folk consider him a coxcomb, I have not the least desire to part."

"Well, Sir Philip, you are the best judge of your own affairs; I have little right to interfere—you are not my husband."

"God forbid!" said Sir Philip hastily; instantly adding, however, "God forbid that I should deprive my friend Sir Geoffrey of so inestimable a treasure."

"But you are my sister's husband," replied the lady; "and I suppose you are aware of her present distress of mind——"

"If hearing of nothing else from morning to night can make me aware of it," said Sir Philip, "I should know something of the matter."

"I do not pretend to reply to your wit, Sir Philip," answered Lady Bothwell; "but you must be sensible that all this distress is on account of apprehensions for your personal safety."

"In that case, I am surprised that Lady Bothwell, at least, should give herself so much trouble upon so insignificant a subject."

"My sister's interest may account for my being anxious to learn something of Sir Philip Forester's motions; about which, otherwise, I know he would not wish me to concern myself. I have a brother's safety, too, to be anxious for."

"You mean Major Falconer, your brother by the mother's side. What can he possibly have to do with our present agreeable conversation?"

"You have had words together, Sir Philip," said Lady Bothwell.

"Naturally; we are connections," replied Sir Philip, "and as such have always had the usual intercourse."

"That is an evasion of the subject," answered the lady. "By words, I mean angry words, on the subject of your usage of your wife."

"If," replied Sir Philip Forester, "you suppose Major Falconer simple enough to intrude his advice upon me, Lady Bothwell, in my domestic matters, you are indeed warranted in believing that I might possibly be so far displeased with the interference as to request him to reserve his advice till it was asked."

"And, being on these terms, you are going to join the very army in which my brother Falconer is now serving?"

"No man knows the path of honour better than Major Falconer," said Sir Philip. "An aspirant after fame, like me, cannot choose a better guide than his footsteps."

Lady Bothwell rose and went to the window, the tears gushing from her eyes.

"And this heartless raillery," she said, "is all the consideration that is to be given to our apprehensions of a quarrel which may bring on the most terrible consequences? Good God! of what can men's hearts be made, who can thus dally with the agony of others?"

Sir Philip Forester was moved; he laid aside the mocking tone in which he had hitherto spoken.

"Dear Lady Bothwell," he said, taking her reluctant hand, "we are both wrong: you are too deeply serious; I, perhaps, too little so. The dispute I had with Major Falconer was of no earthly consequence. Had anything occurred betwixt us that ought to have been settled *par voie du fait*, as we say in France, neither of us is a person that is likely to postpone such a meeting. Permit me to say that were it generally known that you or my Lady Forester are apprehensive of such a catastrophe, it might be the very means of bringing about what would not otherwise be likely to happen. I know your good sense, Lady Bothwell, and that you will understand me when I say that really my affairs require my absence for some months; this Jemima cannot understand; it is a perpetual recurrence of questions, why can you not do this, or that, or the third thing; and when you have proved to her that her expedients are totally ineffectual, you have just to begin the whole round again. Now, do you tell her, dear Lady Bothwell, that *you* are satisfied. She is, you must confess, one of those persons with whom authority goes farther than reasoning. Do but repose a little confidence in me, and you shall see how amply I will repay it."

Lady Bothwell shook her head, as one but half-satisfied. "How difficult it is to extend confidence when the basis on which it ought to rest has been so much shaken! But I will do my best to make Jemima easy; and farther, I can only say that for keeping your present purpose I hold you responsible both to God and man."

"Do not fear that I will deceive you," said Sir Philip; "the safest

conveyance to me will be through the general post-office, Helvoetsluys, where I will take care to leave orders for forwarding my letters. As for Falconer, our only encounter will be over a bottle of Burgundy; so make yourself perfectly easy on his score."

Lady Bothwell could *not* make herself easy; yet she was sensible that her sister hurt her own cause by *taking on*, as the maid-servants call it, too vehemently; and by showing before every stranger, by manner, and sometimes by words also, a dissatisfaction with her husband's journey that was sure to come to his ears and equally certain to displease him. But there was no help for this domestic dissension, which ended only with the day of separation.

I am sorry I cannot tell, with precision, the year in which Sir Philip Forester went over to Flanders; but it was one of those in which the campaign opened with extraordinary fury; and many bloody though indecisive skirmishes were fought between the French on the one side and the Allies on the other. In all our modern improvements, there are none, perhaps, greater than in the accuracy and speed with which intelligence is transmitted from any scene of action to those in this country whom it may concern. During Marlborough's campaigns, the sufferings of the many who had relations in, or along with, the army, were greatly augmented by the suspense in which they were detained for weeks, after they had heard of bloody battles, in which, in all probability, those for whom their bosoms throbbed with anxiety had been personally engaged. Amongst those who were most agonised by this state of uncertainty, was the—I had almost said deserted—wife of the gay Sir Philip Forester. A single letter had informed her of his arrival on the Continent—no others were received. One notice occurred in the newspapers, in which Volunteer Sir Philip Forester was mentioned as having been intrusted with a dangerous reconnoissance, which he had executed with the greatest courage, dexterity, and intelligence, and received the thanks of the commanding officer. The sense of his having acquired distinction brought a momentary glow into the lady's pale cheek; but it was instantly lost in ashen whiteness at the recollection of his danger. After this they had no news whatever, neither from Sir Philip nor even from their brother Falconer. The case of Lady Forester was not indeed different from that of hundreds in the same situation; but a feeble mind is necessarily an irritable one, and the suspense, which some bear with constitutional indifference or philosophical resignation, and some with a disposition to believe and hope the best, was intolerable to Lady Forester, at once solitary and sensitive, low-spirited, and devoid of strength of mind, whether natural or acquired.

CHAPTER II.

AS she received no further news of Sir Philip, whether directly or indirectly, his unfortunate lady began now to feel a sort of consolation even in those careless habits which had so often given her pain. "He is so thoughtless," she repeated a hundred times a day to her sister; "he never writes when things are going on smoothly; it is his way: had anything happened he would have informed us."

Lady Bothwell listened to her sister without attempting to console her. Probably she might be of opinion that even the worst intelligence which could be received from Flanders might not be without some touch of consolation; and that the Dowager Lady Forester, if so she was doomed to be called, might have a source of happiness unknown to the wife of the gayest and finest gentleman in Scotland. This conviction became stronger as they learned from inquiries made at headquarters that Sir Philip was no longer with the army; though whether he had been taken or slain in some of those skirmishes which were perpetually occurring, and in which he loved to distinguish himself, or whether he had, for some unknown reason or capricious change of mind, voluntarily left the service, none of his countrymen in the camp of the Allies could form even a conjecture. Meantime his creditors at home became clamorous, entered into possession of his property, and threatened his person, should he be rash enough to return to Scotland. These additional disadvantages aggravated Lady Bothwell's displeasure against the fugitive husband; while her sister saw nothing in any of them, save what tended to increase her grief for the absence of him whom her imagination now represented—as it had before marriage—gallant, gay, and affectionate.

About this period there appeared in Edinburgh a man of singular

appearance and pretensions. He was commonly called the Paduan Doctor, from having received his education at that famous university. He was supposed to possess some rare receipts in medicine, with which it was affirmed he had wrought remarkable cures. But though, on the one hand, the physicians of Edinburgh termed him an empiric, there were many persons, and among them some of the clergy, who, while they admitted the truth of the cures and the force of his remedies, alleged that Doctor Baptista Damiotti made use of charms and unlawful arts in order to obtain success in his practice. The resorting to him was even solemnly preached against as a seeking of health from idols and a trusting to the help which was to come from Egypt. But the protection which the Paduan Doctor received from some friends of interest and consequence, enabled him to set these imputations at defiance, and to assume, even in the city of Edinburgh, famed as it was for abhorrence of witches and necromancers, the dangerous character of an expounder of futurity. It was at length rumoured that, for a certain gratification, which, of course, was not an inconsiderable one, Doctor Baptista Damiotti could tell the fate of the absent, and even show his visitors the personal form of their absent friends, and the action in which they were engaged at the moment. This rumour came to the ears of Lady Forester, who had reached that pitch of mental agony in which the sufferer will do anything, or endure anything, that suspense may be converted into certainty.

Gentle and timid in most cases, her state of mind made her equally obstinate and reckless, and it was with no small surprise and alarm that her sister, Lady Bothwell, heard her express a resolution to visit this man of art, and learn from him the fate of her husband. Lady Bothwell remonstrated on the improbability that such pretensions as those of this foreigner could be founded in anything but imposture.

"I care not," said the deserted wife, "what degree of ridicule I may incur; if there be any one chance out of a hundred that I may obtain some certainty of my husband's fate, I would not miss that chance for whatever else the world can offer me."

Lady Bothwell next urged the unlawfulness of resorting to such sources of forbidden knowledge.

"Sister," replied the sufferer, "he who is dying of thirst cannot refrain from drinking even poisoned water. She who suffers under suspense must seek information, even were the powers which offer it unhallowed and infernal. I go to learn my fate alone; and this very evening will I know it: the sun that rises to-morrow shall find me, if not more happy, at least more resigned."

"Sister," said Lady Bothwell, "if you are determined upon this wild step, you shall not go alone. If this man be an impostor, you may be too much agitated by your feelings to detect his villainy. If, which I cannot believe, there be any truth in what he pretends, you shall not be exposed alone to a communication of so extraordinary

a nature. I will go with you, if indeed you determine to go. But yet reconsider your project, and renounce inquiries which cannot be prosecuted without guilt, and perhaps without danger."

Lady Forester threw herself into her sister's arms, and, clasping her to her bosom, thanked her a hundred times for the offer of her company; while she declined with a melancholy gesture the friendly advice with which it was accompanied.

When the hour of twilight arrived,—which was the period when the Paduan Doctor was understood to receive the visits of those who came to consult with him,—the two ladies left their apartments in the Canongate of Edinburgh, having their dress arranged like that of women of an inferior description, and their plaids disposed around their faces as they were worn by the same class; for, in those days of aristocracy the quality of the wearer was generally indicated by the manner in which her plaid was disposed, as well as by the fineness of its texture. It was Lady Bothwell who had suggested this species of disguise, partly to avoid observation as they should go to the conjurer's house, and partly in order to make trial of his penetration by appearing before him in a feigned character. Lady Forester's servant, of tried fidelity, had been employed by her to propitiate the Doctor by a suitable fee, and a story intimating that a soldier's wife desired to know the fate of her husband; a subject upon which, in all probability, the sage was very frequently consulted.

To the last moment, when the palace clock struck eight, Lady Bothwell earnestly watched her sister, in hopes that she might retreat from her rash undertaking; but as mildness, and even timidity, is capable at times of vehement and fixed purposes, she found Lady Forester resolutely unmoved and determined when the moment of departure arrived. Ill satisfied with the expedition, but determined not to leave her sister at such a crisis, Lady Bothwell accompanied Lady Forester through more than one obscure street and lane, the servant walking before and acting as their guide. At length he suddenly turned into a narrow court, and knocked at an arched door, which seemed to belong to a building of some antiquity. It opened, though no one appeared to act as porter; and the servant, stepping aside from the entrance, motioned the ladies to enter. They had no sooner done so than it shut, and excluded their guide. The two ladies found themselves in a small vestibule, illuminated by a dim lamp, and having, when the door was closed, no communication with the external light or air. The door of an inner apartment, partly open, was at the further side of the vestibule.

"We must not hesitate now, Jemima," said Lady Bothwell, and walked forwards into the inner room, where, surrounded by books, maps, philosophical utensils, and other implements of peculiar shape and appearance, they found the man of art.

There was nothing very peculiar in the Italian's appearance. He

had the dark complexion and marked features of his country, seemed about fifty years old, and was handsomely, but plainly, dressed in a full suit of black clothes, which was then the universal costume of the medical profession. Large waxlights, in silver sconces, illuminated the apartment, which was reasonably furnished. He rose as the ladies entered; and, notwithstanding the inferiority of their dress, received them with the marked respect due to their quality, and which foreigners are usually punctilious in rendering to those to whom such honours are due.

Lady Bothwell endeavoured to maintain her proposed incognito; and, as the Doctor ushered them to the upper end of the room, made a motion declining his courtesy, as unfitted for their condition. "We are poor people, sir," she said; "only my sister's distress has brought us to consult your worship whether——"

He smiled as he interrupted her. "I am aware, madam, of your sister's distress and its cause; I am aware, also, that I am honoured with a visit from two ladies of the highest consideration—Lady Bothwell and Lady Forester. If I could not distinguish them from the class of society which their present dress would indicate, there would be small possibility of my being able to gratify them by giving the information which they come to seek."

"I can easily understand——" said Lady Bothwell.

"Pardon my boldness to interrupt you, milady," cried the Italian; "your ladyship was about to say that you could easily understand that I had got possession of your names by means of your domestic. But in thinking so you do injustice to the fidelity of your servant, and, I may add, to the skill of one who is also not less your humble servant—Baptista Damiotti."

"I have no intention to do either, sir," said Lady Bothwell, maintaining a tone of composure, though somewhat surprised, "but the situation is something new to me. If you know who we are, you also know, sir, what brought us here."

"Curiosity to know the fate of a Scottish gentleman of rank, now, or lately upon the Continent," answered the seer; "his name is Il Cavaliero Philippo Forester; a gentleman who has the honour to be husband to this lady, and, with your ladyship's permission for using plain language, the misfortune not to value as it deserves that inestimable advantage."

Lady Forester sighed deeply, and Lady Bothwell replied,—

"Since you know our object without our telling it, the only question that remains is, whether you have the power to relieve my sister's anxiety?"

"I have, madam," answered the Paduan scholar; "but there is still a previous inquiry. Have you the courage to behold with your own eyes what the Cavaliero Philippo Forester is now doing? or will you take it on my report?"

"That question my sister must answer for herself," said Lady Bothwell.

"With my own eyes will I endure to see whatever you have power to show me," said Lady Forester, with the same determined spirit which had stimulated her since her resolution was taken upon this subject.

"There may be danger in it."

"If gold can compensate the risk," said Lady Forester, taking out her purse.

"I do not such things for the purpose of gain," answered the foreigner. "I dare not turn my art to such a purpose. If I take the gold of the wealthy, it is but to bestow it on the poor; nor do I ever accept more than the sum I have already received from your servant. Put up your purse, madam; an adept needs not your gold."

Lady Bothwell, considering this rejection of her sister's offer as a mere trick of an empiric to induce her to press a larger sum upon him, and willing that the scene should be commenced and ended, offered some gold in turn, observing that it was only to enlarge the sphere of his charity.

"Let Lady Bothwell enlarge the sphere of her own charity," said the Paduan, "not merely in giving of alms, in which I know she is not deficient, but in judging the character of others; and let her oblige Baptista Damiotti by believing him honest till she shall discover him to be a knave. Do not be surprised, madam, if I speak in answer to your thoughts rather than your expressions, and tell me once more whether you have courage to look on what I am prepared to show?"

"I own, sir," said Lady Bothwell, "that your words strike me with some sense of fear; but whatever my sister desires to witness I will not shrink from witnessing along with her."

"Nay, the danger only consists in the risk of your resolution failing you. The sight can only last for the space of seven minutes; and should you interrupt the vision by speaking a single word, not only would the charm be broken, but some danger might result to the spectators. But if you can remain steadily silent for the seven minutes, your curiosity will be gratified without the slightest risk; and for this I will engage my honour."

Internally Lady Bothwell thought the security was but an indifferent one; but she suppressed the suspicion, as if she had believed that the adept, whose dark features wore a half-formed smile, could in reality read even her most secret reflections. A solemn pause then ensued, until Lady Forester gathered courage enough to reply to the physician, as he termed himself, that she would abide with firmness and silence the sight which he had promised to exhibit to them. Upon this he made them a low obeisance, and saying he went to prepare matters to meet their wish, left the apartment. The two sisters, hand-in-hand, as if seeking by that close union to divert any danger which might threaten them, sat down on two seats in immediate contact with

each other: Jemima seeking support in the manly and habitual courage of Lady Bothwell; and she, on the other hand, more agitated than she had expected, endeavouring to fortify herself by the desperate resolution which circumstances had forced her sister to assume. The one perhaps said to herself that her sister never feared anything; and the other might reflect that what so feeble a minded woman as Jemima did not fear, could not properly be a subject of apprehension to a person of firmness and resolution like herself.

In a few moments the thoughts of both were diverted from their own situation by a strain of music so singularly sweet and solemn, that while it seemed calculated to avert or dispel any feeling unconnected with its harmony, increased, at the same time, the solemn excitation which the preceding interview was calculated to produce. The music was that of some instrument with which they were unacquainted; but circumstances afterwards led my ancestress to believe that it was that of the harmonica, which she heard at a much later period in life.

When these heaven-born sounds had ceased, a door opened in the upper end of the apartment, and they saw Damiotti, standing at the head of two or three steps, sign to them to advance. His dress was so different from that which he had worn a few minutes before, that they could hardly recognise him; and the deadly paleness of his countenance, and a certain stern rigidity of muscles, like that of one whose mind is made up to some strange and daring action, had totally changed the somewhat sarcastic expression with which he had previously regarded them both, and particularly Lady Bothwell. He was barefooted, excepting a species of sandals in the antique fashion; his legs were naked beneath the knees; above them he wore hose, and a doublet of dark crimson silk close to his body; and over that a flowing loose robe, something resembling a surplice, of snow-white linen; his throat and neck were uncovered, and his long, straight, black hair was carefully combed down at full length.

As the ladies approached at his bidding, he showed no gesture of that ceremonious courtesy of which he had been formerly lavish. On the contrary, he made the signal of advance with an air of command; and when, arm-in-arm, and with insecure steps, the sisters approached the spot where he stood, it was with a warning frown that he pressed his finger to his lips, as if reiterating his condition of absolute silence, while, stalking before them, he led the way into the next apartment.

This was a large room, hung with black, as if for a funeral. At the upper end was a table, or rather a species of altar, covered with the same lugubrious colour, on which lay divers objects resembling the usual implements of sorcery. These objects were not indeed visible as they advanced into the apartment; for the light which displayed them, being only that of two expiring lamps, was extremely faint. The master—to use the Italian phrase for persons of this description—

approached the upper end of the room, with a genuflexion like that of a Catholic to the crucifix, and at the same time crossed himself. The ladies followed in silence, and arm-in-arm. Two or three low, broad steps led to a platform in front of the altar, or what resembled such. Here the sage took his stand, and placed the ladies beside him, once more earnestly repeating by signs his injunctions of silence. The Italian then, extending his bare arm from under his linen vestment, pointed with his forefinger to five large flambeaux, or torches, placed on each side of the altar. They took fire successively at the approach of his hand, or rather of his finger, and spread a strong light through the room. By this the visitors could discern that on the seeming altar were disposed two naked swords laid crosswise; a large open book, which they conceived to be a copy of the Holy Scriptures, but in a language to them unknown; and beside this mysterious volume was placed a human skull. But what struck the sisters most was a very tall and broad mirror, which occupied all the space behind the altar, and, illumined by the lighted torches, reflected the mysterious articles which were laid upon it,

The master then placed himself between the two ladies, and, pointing to the mirror, took each by the hand, but without speaking a syllable. They gazed intently on the polished and sable space to which he had directed their attention. Suddenly the surface assumed a new and singular appearance. It no longer simply reflected the objects placed before it, but, as if it had self-contained scenery of its own, objects began to appear within it, at first in a disorderly, indistinct, and miscellaneous manner, like form arranging itself out of chaos; at length, in distinct and defined shape and symmetry. It was thus that, after some shifting of light and darkness over the face of the wonderful glass, a long perspective of arches and columns began to arrange itself on its sides, and a vaulted roof on the upper part of it; till, after many oscillations, the whole vision gained a fixed and stationary appearance, representing the interior of a foreign church. The pillars were stately, and hung with scutcheons; the arches were lofty and magnificent; the floor was lettered with funeral inscriptions. But there were no separate shrines, no images, no display of chalice or crucifix on the altar. It was, therefore, a Protestant church upon the Continent. A clergyman, dressed in the Geneva gown and band, stood by the communion-table, and, with the Bible opened before him, and his clerk awaiting in the background, seemed prepared to perform some service of the Church to which he belonged.

At length there entered the middle aisle of the building a numerous party, which appeared to be a bridal one, as a lady and gentleman walked first, hand-in-hand, followed by a large concourse of persons of both sexes, gaily, nay richly, attired. The bride, whose features they could distinctly see, seemed not more than sixteen years old, and extremely beautiful. The bridegroom, for some seconds, moved rather

with his shoulder towards them, and his face averted; but his elegance of form and step struck the sisters at once with the same apprehension. As he turned his face suddenly, it was frightfully realised, and they

"Suddenly one of the officers . . . . rushed hastily towards the party" (p 334).

saw, in the gay bridegroom before them, Sir Philip Forester. His wife uttered an imperfect exclamation, at the sound of which the whole scene stirred and seemed to separate.

"I could compare it to nothing," said Lady Bothwell, while recounting the wonderful tale, "but to the dispersion of the reflection

offered by a deep and calm pool when a stone is suddenly cast into it, and the shadows become dissipated and broken."

The master pressed both the ladies' hands severely, as if to remind them of their promise, and of the danger which they incurred. The exclamation died away on Lady Forester's tongue, without attaining perfect utterance, and the scene in the glass, after the fluctuation of a minute, again resumed to the eye its former appearance of a real scene existing within the mirror, as if represented in a picture, save that the figures were movable instead of being stationary.

The representation of Sir Philip Forester, now distinctly visible in form and feature, was seen to lead on towards the clergyman that beautiful girl, who advanced at once with diffidence and with a species of affectionate pride. In the meantime, and just as the clergyman had arranged the bridal company before him, and seemed about to commence the service, another group of persons, of whom two or three were officers, entered the church. They moved, at first, forward, as though they came to witness the bridal ceremony, but suddenly one of the officers, whose back was towards the spectators, detached himself from his companions, and rushed hastily towards the marriage party, when the whole of them turned towards him, as if attracted by some exclamation which had accompanied his advance. Suddenly the intruder drew his sword; the bridegroom unsheathed his own, and made towards him; swords were also drawn by other individuals, both of the marriage party and of those who had last entered. They fell into a sort of confusion, the clergyman and some elder and graver persons labouring apparently to keep the peace, while the hotter spirits on both sides brandished their weapons. But now the period of the brief space during which the soothsayer, as he pretended, was permitted to exhibit his art, was arrived. The fumes again mixed together and dissolved gradually from observation; the vaults and columns of the church rolled asunder and disappeared; and the front of the mirror reflected nothing save the blazing torches, and the melancholy apparatus placed on the altar or table before it.

The doctor led the ladies, who greatly required his support, into the apartment from whence they came; where wine, essences, and other means of restoring suspended animation, had been provided during his absence. He motioned them to chairs, which they occupied in silence; Lady Forester, in particular, wringing her hands, and casting her eyes up to heaven, but without speaking a word, as if the spell had been still before her eyes.

"And what we have seen is even now acting?" said Lady Bothwell, collecting herself with difficulty.

"That," answered Baptista Damiotti, "I cannot justly, or with certainty, say. But it is either now acting or has been acted, during a short space before this. It is the last remarkable transaction in which the Cavalier Forester has been engaged."

Lady Bothwell then expressed anxiety concerning her sister, whose altered countenance, and apparent unconsciousness of what passed around her, excited her apprehensions how it might be possible to convey her home.

"I have prepared for that," answered the adept; "I have directed the servant to bring your equipage as near to this place as the narrowness of the street will permit. Fear not for your sister; but give her, when you return home, this composing draught, and she will be better to-morrow morning. Few," he added, in a melancholy tone, "leave this house as well in health as they entered it. Such being the consequence of seeking knowledge by mysterious means, I leave you to judge the condition of those who have power of gratifying such irregular curiosity. Farewell, and forget not the potion."

"I will give her nothing that comes from you," said Lady Bothwell; "I have seen enough of your art already. Perhaps you would poison us both to conceal your own necromancy. But we are persons who want neither the means of making our wrongs known, nor the assistance of friends to right them."

"You have had no wrongs from me, madam," said the adept. "You sought one who is little grateful for such honour. He seeks no one, and only gives responses to those who invite and call upon him. After all, you have but learned a little sooner the evil which you must still be doomed to endure. I hear your servant's step at the door, and will detain your ladyship and Lady Forester no longer. The next packet from the Continent will explain what you have already partly witnessed. Let it not, if I may advise, pass too suddenly into your sister's hands."

So saying, he bid Lady Bothwell good-night. She went, lighted by the adept, to the vestibule, where he hastily threw a black cloak over his singular dress, and, opening the door, intrusted his visitors to the care of the servant. It was with difficulty that Lady Bothwell sustained her sister to the carriage, though it was only twenty steps distant. When they arrived at home Lady Forester required medical assistance. The physician of the family attended, and shook his head on feeling her pulse.

"Here has been," he said, "a violent and sudden shock on the nerves. I must know how it has happened."

Lady Bothwell admitted they had visited the conjurer, and that Lady Forester had received some bad news respecting her husband, Sir Philip.

"That rascally quack would make my fortune were he to stay in Edinburgh," said the graduate; "this is the seventh nervous case I have heard of his making for me, and all by effect of terror." He next examined the composing draught which Lady Bothwell had unconsciously brought in her hand, tasted it, and pronounced it very germain to the matter, and what would save an application to the

apothecary. He then paused, and looking at Lady Bothwell very significantly, at length added, "I suppose I must not ask your ladyship anything about this Italian warlock's proceedings?"

"Indeed, Doctor," answered Lady Bothwell, "I consider what passed as confidential; and though the man may be a rogue, yet, as we were fools enough to consult him, we should, I think, be honest enough to keep his counsel."

"*May* be a knave—come," said the doctor, "I am glad to hear your ladyship allows such a possibility in anything that comes from Italy."

"What comes from Italy may be as good as what comes from Hanover, Doctor. But you and I will remain good friends, and that it may be so we will say nothing of Whig and Tory."

"Not I," said the doctor, receiving his fee, and taking his hat; "a Carolus serves my purpose as well as a Willielmus. But I should like to know why old Lady Saint Ringan's, and all that set, go about wasting their decayed lungs in puffing this foreign fellow."

"Ay, you had best set him down a Jesuit, as Scrub says." On these terms they parted.

The poor patient—whose nerves, from an extraordinary state of tension, had at length become relaxed in as extraordinary a degree—continued to struggle with a sort of imbecility, the growth of superstitious terror, when the shocking tidings were brought from Holland which fulfilled even her worst expectations.

They were sent by the celebrated Earl of Stair, and contained the melancholy event of a duel betwixt Sir Philip Forester and his wife's half-brother, Captain Falconer, of the Scotch-Dutch, as they were then called, in which the latter had been killed. The cause of quarrel rendered the incident still more shocking. It seemed that Sir Philip had left the army suddenly, in consequence of being unable to pay a very considerable sum, which he had lost to another volunteer at play. He had changed his name, and taken up his residence at Rotterdam, where he had insinuated himself into the good graces of an ancient and rich burgomaster, and, by his handsome person and graceful manners captivated the affections of his only child, a very young person, of great beauty, and the heiress of much wealth. Delighted with the specious attractions of his proposed son-in-law, the wealthy merchant—whose idea of the British character was too high to admit of his taking any precaution to acquire evidence of his condition and circumstances—gave his consent to the marriage. It was about to be celebrated in the principal church of the city, when it was interrupted by a singular occurrence.

Captain Falconer having been detached to Rotterdam to bring up a part of the brigade of Scottish auxiliaries, who were in quarters there, a person of consideration in the town, to whom he had been formerly known, proposed to him for amusement to go to the high

church to see a countryman of his own married to the daughter of a wealthy burgomaster. Captain Falconer went accordingly, accompanied by his Dutch acquaintance, with a party of his friends, and two or three officers of the Scotch brigade. His astonishment may be conceived when he saw his own brother-in-law, a married man, on the point of leading to the altar the innocent and beautiful creature, upon whom he was about to practise a base and unmanly deceit. He proclaimed his villainy on the spot, and the marriage was interrupted of course. But against the opinion of more thinking men, who considered Sir Philip Forester as having thrown himself out of the rank of men of honour, Captain Falconer admitted him to the privilege of such, accepted a challenge from him, and in the rencontre received a mortal wound. Such are the ways of Heaven, mysterious in our eyes. Lady Forester never recovered the shock of this dismal intelligence.

"And did this tragedy," said I, "take place exactly at the time when the scene in the mirror was exhibited?"

"It is hard to be obliged to maim one's story," answered my aunt; "but to speak the truth, it happened some days sooner than the apparition was exhibited."

"And so there remained a possibility," said I, "that by some secret and speedy communication the artist might have received early intelligence of that incident."

"The incredulous pretended so," replied my aunt.

"What became of the adept?" demanded I.

"Why, a warrant came down shortly afterwards to arrest him for high-treason, as an agent of the Chevalier St. George; and Lady Bothwell, recollecting the hints which had escaped the doctor, an ardent friend of the Protestant succession, did then call to remembrance that this man was chiefly *prôné* among the ancient matrons of her own political persuasion. It certainly seemed probable that intelligence from the Continent, which could easily have been transmitted by an active and powerful agent, might have enabled him to prepare such a scene of phantasmagoria as she had herself witnessed. Yet there were so many difficulties in assigning a natural explanation, that, to the day of her death, she remained in great doubt on the subject, and much disposed to cut the Gordian knot, by admitting the existence of supernatural agency."

"But, my dear aunt," said I, "what became of the man of skill?"

"Oh, he was too good a fortune-teller not to be able to foresee that his own destiny would be tragical if he waited the arrival of the man with the silver greyhound upon his sleeve. He made, as we say, a moonlight flitting, and was nowhere to be seen or heard of. Some noise there was about papers or letters found in the house, but it died

away, and Doctor Baptista Damiotti was soon as little talked of as Galen or Hippocrates."

"And Sir Philip Forester," said I, "did he too vanish for ever from the public scene?"

"No," replied my kind informer. "He was heard of once more, and it was upon a remarkable occasion. It is said that we Scots, when there was such a nation in existence, have, among our full peck of virtues, one or two little barleycorns of vice. In particular, it is alleged that we rarely forgive, and never forget, any injuries received; that we used to make an idol of our resentment, as poor Lady Constance did of her grief; and are addicted, as Burns says, to 'nursing our wrath to keep it warm.' Lady Bothwell was not without this feeling; and, I believe, nothing whatever, scarce the restoration of the Stuart line, could have happened so delicious to her feelings as an opportunity of being revenged on Sir Philip Forester for the deep and double injury which had deprived her of a sister and of a brother. But nothing of him was heard or known till many a year had passed away.

"At length—it was on a Fastern's E'en (Shrovetide) assembly, at which the whole fashion at Edinburgh attended, full and frequent, and when Lady Bothwell had a seat amongst the lady patronesses, that one of the attendants on the company whispered into her ear that a gentleman wished to speak with her in private.

"'In private? and in an assembly room. He must be mad! Tell him to call upon me to-morrow morning.'

"'I said so, my lady,' answered the man; 'but he desired me to give you this paper.'

"She undid the billet, which was curiously folded and sealed. It only bore the words, '*On business of life and death*,' written in a hand which she had never seen before. Suddenly it occurred to her that it might concern the safety of some of her political friends; she therefore followed the messenger to a small apartment where the refreshments were prepared, and from which the general company was excluded. She found an old man, who, at her approach, rose up and bowed profoundly. His appearance indicated a broken constitution; and his dress, though sedulously rendered conforming to the etiquette of a ball-room, was worn and tarnished, and hung in folds about his emaciated person. Lady Bothwell was about to feel for her purse, expecting to get rid of the supplicant at the expense of a little money, but some fear of a mistake arrested her purpose. She therefore gave the man leisure to explain himself.

"'I have the honour to speak with the Lady Bothwell?'

"'I am Lady Bothwell; allow me to say that this is no time or place for long explanations. What are your commands with me?'

"'Your ladyship,' said the old man, 'had once a sister.'

"'True; whom I loved as my own soul.'

"'And a brother.'

"'The bravest, the kindest, the most affectionate!' said Lady Bothwell.

"'Both these beloved relatives you lost by the fault of an unfortunate man,' continued the stranger.

"'By the crime of an unnatural, bloody-minded murderer,' said the lady.

"'I am answered,' replied the old man, bowing, as if to withdraw.

"'Stop, sir, I command you,' said Lady Bothwell. 'Who are you, that, at such a place and time, come to recall these horrible recollections? I insist upon knowing.'

"'I am one who intends Lady Bothwell no injury; but, on the contrary, to offer her the means of doing a deed of Christian charity, which the world would wonder at and which Heaven would reward; but I find her in no temper for such a sacrifice as I was prepared to ask.'

"'Speak out, sir; what is your meaning?' said Lady Bothwell.

"'The wretch that has wronged you so deeply,' rejoined the stranger, 'is now on his death-bed. His days have been days of misery, his nights have been sleepless hours of anguish; yet he cannot die without your forgiveness. His life has been an unremitting penance; yet he dares not part from his burden while your curses load his soul.'

"'Tell him,' said Lady Bothwell, sternly, 'to ask pardon of that Being whom he has so greatly offended; not of an erring mortal like himself. What could my forgiveness avail him?'

"'Much,' answered the old man. 'It will be an earnest of that which he may then venture to ask from his Creator, lady, and from yours. Remember, Lady Bothwell, you, too, have a death-bed to look forward to; your soul may, all human souls must, feel the awe of facing the judgment-seat, with the wounds of an untented conscience, raw, and rankling—what thought would it be then that should whisper, "I have given no mercy, how then shall I ask it"?'

"'Man, whosoever thou may'st be,' replied Lady Bothwell, 'urge me not so cruelly. It would be but blasphemous hypocrisy to utter with my lips the words which every throb of my heart protests against. They would open the earth and give to light the wasted form of my sister, the bloody form of my murdered brother. Forgive him? Never, never!'

"'Great God!' cried the old man, holding up his hands, 'is it thus the worms which Thou hast called out of dust obey the commands of their Maker? Farewell, proud and unforgiving woman. Exult that thou hast added to a death in want and pain the agonies of religious despair; but never again mock Heaven by petitioning for the pardon which thou hast refused to grant.'

"He was turning from her.

"'Stop,' she exclaimed; 'I will try; yes, I will try to pardon him.'

"'Gracious lady,' said the old man, 'you will relieve the overburdened soul, which dare not sever itself from its sinful companion of earth without being at peace with you. What do I know—your forgiveness may perhaps preserve for penitence the dregs of a wretched life.'

"'Ha!' said the lady, as a sudden light broke on her, 'it is the villain himself!' And grasping Sir Philip Forester—for it was he, and no other—by the collar she raised a cry of 'Murder, murder! Seize the murderer!'

"At an exclamation so singular, in such a place, the company thronged into the apartment, but Sir Philip Forester was no longer there. He had forcibly extricated himself from Lady Bothwell's hold, and had run out of the apartment which opened on the landing-place of the stair. There seemed no escape in that direction, for there were several persons coming up the steps, and others descending. But the unfortunate man was desperate. He threw himself over the balustrade, and alighted safely in the lobby, though a leap of fifteen feet at least, then dashed into the street, and was lost in darkness. Some of the Bothwell family made pursuit, and had they come up with the fugitive they might have perhaps slain him; for in those days men's blood ran warm in their veins. But the police did not interfere; the matter most criminal having happened long since, and in a foreign land. Indeed, it was always thought that this extraordinary scene originated in a hypocritical experiment, by which Sir Philip desired to ascertain whether he might return to his native country in safety from the resentment of a family which he had injured so deeply. As the result fell out so contrary to his wishes, he is believed to have returned to the Continent, and there died in exile."

So closed the tale of the MYSTERIOUS MIRROR.

THE TAPESTRIED CHAMBER,

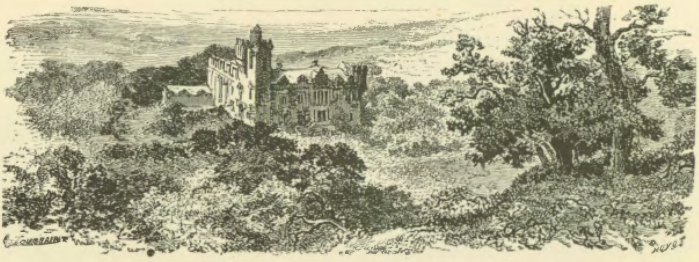
OR,

THE LADY IN THE SACQUE.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS is another little story from *The Keepsake* of 1828. It was told to me many years ago, by the late Miss Anna Seward, who, among other accomplishments that rendered her an amusing inmate in a country house, had that of recounting narratives of this sort with very considerable effect; much greater, indeed, than any one would be apt to guess from the style of her written performances. There are hours and moods when most people are not displeased to listen to such things; and I have heard some of the greatest and wisest of my contemporaries take their share in telling them.

August, 1831.



THE TAPESTRIED CHAMBER;

OR,

THE LADY IN THE SACQUE.

THE following narrative is given from the pen, so far as memory permits, in the same character in which it was presented to the author's ear; nor has he claim to further praise, or to be more deeply censured, than in proportion to the good or bad judgment which he has employed in selecting his materials, as he has studiously avoided any attempt at ornament, which might interfere with the simplicity of the tale.

At the same time it must be admitted that the particular class of stories which turns on the marvellous, possesses a stronger influence when told than when committed to print. The volume taken up at noonday, though rehearsing the same incidents, conveys a much more feeble impression than is achieved by the voice of the speaker on a circle of fireside auditors, who hang upon the narrative as the narrator details the minute incidents which serve to give it authenticity, and lowers his voice with an affectation of mystery while he approaches the fearful and wonderful part. It was with such advantages that the present writer heard the following events related, more than twenty years since, by the celebrated Miss Seward, of Litchfield, who, to her numerous accomplishments, added, in a remarkable degree, the power of narrative in private conversation. In its present form the tale must necessarily lose all the interest which was attached to it by the flexible voice and intelligent features of the gifted narrator. Yet still, read aloud to an undoubting audience by the doubtful light of the closing

evening, or, in silence, by a decaying taper, and amidst the solitude of a half-lighted apartment, it may redeem its character as a good ghost-story. Miss Seward always affirmed that she had derived her information from an authentic source, although she suppressed the names of the two persons chiefly concerned. I will not avail myself of any particulars I may have since received concerning the localities of the detail, but suffer them to rest under the same general description in which they were first related to me; and for the same reason I will not add to, or diminish the narrative, by any circumstances, whether more or less material, but simply rehearse as I heard it a story of supernatural terror.

About the end of the American war, when the officers of Lord Cornwallis's army, which surrendered at York Town, and others, who had been made prisoners during the impolitic and ill-fated controversy, were returning to their own country, to relate their adventures and repose themselves after their fatigues, there was amongst them a general officer, to whom Miss S. gave the name of Browne, but merely, as I understood, to save the inconvenience of introducing a nameless agent in the narrative. He was an officer of merit, as well as a gentleman of high consideration for family and attainments.

Some business had carried General Browne upon a tour through the western counties, when, in the conclusion of a morning stage, he found himself in the vicinity of a small country town, which presented a scene of uncommon beauty, and of a character peculiarly English.

The little town, with its stately old church, whose tower bore testimony to the devotion of ages long past, lay amidst pasture and corn-fields of small extent, but bounded and divided with hedgerow timber of great age and size. There were few marks of modern improvement. The environs of the place intimated neither the solitude of decay nor the bustle of novelty; the houses were old, but in good repair; and the beautiful little river murmured freely on its way to the left of the town, neither restrained by a dam nor bordered by a towing-path.

Upon a gentle eminence, nearly a mile to the southward of the town, were seen, amongst many venerable oaks and tangled thickets, the turrets of a castle, as old as the wars of York and Lancaster, but which seemed to have received important alterations during the age of Elizabeth and her successor. It had not been a place of great size; but whatever accommodation it formerly afforded, was, it must be supposed, still to be obtained within its walls; at least, such was the inference which General Browne drew from observing the smoke arise merrily from several of the ancient wreathed and carved chimney-stalks. The wall of the park ran alongside of the highway for two or three hundred yards; and through the different points by which the eye found glimpses into the woodland scenery, it seemed to be well

stocked. Other points of view opened in succession; now a full one of the front of the old castle, and now a side glimpse at its particular towers; the former rich in all the bizarrerie of the Elizabethan school, while the simple aud solid strength of other parts of the building seemed to show that they had been raised more for defence than ostentation.

Delighted with the partial glimpses which he obtained of the castle through the woods and glades by which this ancient feudal fortress was surrounded, our military traveller was determined to inquire whether it might not deserve a nearer view, and whether it contained family pictures or other objects of curiosity worthy of a stranger's visit; when, leaving the vicinity of the park, he rolled through a clean and well-paved street, and stopped at the door of a well-frequented inn.

Before ordering horses to proceed on his journey, General Browne made inquiries concerning the proprietor of the château which had so attracted his admiration; and was equally surprised and pleased at hearing in reply a nobleman named, whom we shall call Lord Woodville. How fortunate! Much of Browne's early recollections, both at school and at college, had been connected with young Woodville, whom, by a few questions, he now ascertained to be the same with the owner of this fair domain. He had been raised to the peerage by the decease of his father a few months before, and, as the general learned from the landlord, the term of mourning being ended, was now taking possession of his paternal estate, in the jovial season of merry autumn, accompanied by a select party of friends to enjoy the sports of a country famous for game.

This was delightful news to our traveller. Frank Woodville had been Richard Browne's fag at Eton, and his chosen intimate at Christ Church; their pleasures and their tasks had been the same; and the honest soldier's heart warmed to find his early friend in possession of so delightful a residence, and of an estate, as the landlord assured him with a nod and a wink, fully adequate to maintain and add to his dignity. Nothing was more natural than that the traveller should suspend a journey, which there was nothing to render hurried, to pay a visit to an old friend under such agreeable circumstances.

The fresh horses, therefore, had only the brief task of conveying the general's travelling carriage to Woodville Castle. A porter admitted them at a modern Gothic lodge, built in that style to correspond with the castle itself, and at the same time rang a bell to give warning of the approach of visitors. Apparently the sound of the bell had suspended the separation of the company, bent on the various amusements of the morning; for, on entering the court of the château, several young men were lounging about in their sporting dresses, looking at and criticising the dogs which the keepers held in readiness to attend their pastime. As General Browne alighted, the young lord

came to the gate of the hall, and for an instant gazed, as at a stranger, upon the countenance of his friend, on which war with its fatigues and its wounds, had made a great alteration. But the uncertainty lasted no longer than till the visitor had spoken, and the hearty greeting which followed was such as can only be exchanged betwixt those who have passed together the merry days of careless boyhood or early youth.

"If I could have formed a wish, my dear Browne," said Lord Woodville, "it would have been to have you here, of all men, upon this occasion, which my friends are good enough to hold as a sort of holiday. Do not think you have been unwatched during the years you have been absent from us. I have traced you through your dangers, your triumphs, your misfortunes, and was delighted to see that, whether in victory or defeat, the name of my old friend was always distinguished with applause."

The general made a suitable reply, and congratulated his friend on his new dignities, and the possession of a place and domain so beautiful.

"Nay, you have seen nothing of it as yet," said Lord Woodville, "and I trust you do not mean to leave us till you are better acquainted with it. It is true, I confess, that my present party is pretty large, and the old house like other places of the kind, does not possess so much accommodation as the extent of the outward walls appears to promise. But we can give you a comfortable old-fashioned room; and I venture to suppose that your campaigns have taught you to be glad of worse quarters."

The general shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "I presume," he said, "the worst apartment in your château is considerably superior to the old tobacco-cask in which I was fain to take up my night's lodging when I was in the Bush, as the Virginians call it, with the light corps. There I lay, like Diogenes himself, so delighted with my covering from the elements, that I made a vain attempt to have it rolled on to my next quarters; but my commander for the time would give way to no such luxurious provision, and I took farewell of my beloved cask with tears in my eyes."

"Well, then, since you do not fear your quarters," said Lord Woodville, "you will stay with me a week at least. Of guns, dogs, fishing-rods, flies, and means of sport by sea and land, we have enough and to spare: you cannot pitch on an amusement, but we will pitch on the means of pursuing it. But if you prefer the gun and pointers, I will go with you myself, and see whether you have mended your shooting since you have been amongst the Indians of the back settlements."

The general gladly accepted his friendly host's proposal in all its points. After a morning of manly exercise, the company met at dinner, where it was the delight of Lord Woodville to conduce to the

display of the high properties of his recovered friend, so as to recommend him to his guests, most of whom were persons of distinction. He led General Browne to speak of the scenes he had witnessed; and as every word marked alike the brave officer and the sensible man, who retained possession of his cool judgment under the most imminent dangers, the company looked upon the soldier with general respect, as on one who had proved himself possessed of an uncommon portion of personal courage—that attribute, of all others, of which everybody desires to be thought possessed.

The day at Woodville Castle ended as usual in such mansions. The hospitality stopped within the limits of good order; music, in which the young lord was a proficient, succeeded to the circulation of the bottle: cards and billiards, for those who preferred such amusements, were in readiness; but the exercise of the morning required early hours, and not long after eleven o'clock the guests began to retire to their several apartments.

The young lord himself conducted his friend, General Browne, to the chamber destined for him, which answered the description he had given of it, being comfortable but old-fashioned. The bed was of the massive form used in the end of the seventeenth century, and the curtains of faded silk, heavily trimmed with tarnished gold. But then the sheets, pillows, and blankets looked delightful to the campaigner, when he thought of his "mansion, the cask." There was an air of gloom in the tapestry hangings, which, with their worn-out graces, curtained the walls of the little chamber, and gently undulated as the autumnal breeze found its way through the ancient lattice-window, which pattered and whistled as the air gained entrance. The toilet, too, with its mirror, turbaned, after the manner of the beginning of the century, with a coiffure of murrey-coloured silk, and its hundred strange-shaped boxes, providing for arrangements which had been obsolete for more than fifty years, had an antique, and in so far a melancholy aspect. But nothing could blaze more brightly and cheerfully than the two large wax candles; or if aught could rival them, it was the flaming bickering faggots in the chimney that sent at once their gleam and their warmth through the snug apartment; which, notwithstanding the general antiquity of its appearance, was not wanting in the least convenience that modern habits rendered either necessary or desirable.

"This is an old-fashioned sleeping apartment, General," said the young lord; "but I hope you find nothing that makes you envy your old tobacco-cask."

"I am not particular respecting my lodgings," replied the general; "yet were I to make any choice, I would prefer this chamber by many degrees to the gayer and more modern rooms of your family mansion. Believe me, that when I unite its modern air of comfort with its venerable antiquity, and recollect that it is your lordship's property, I

shall feel in better quarters here than if I were in the best hotel London could afford."

"I trust—I have no doubt—that you will find yourself as comfortable as I wish you, my dear General," said the young nobleman; and once more bidding his guest good-night, he shook him by the hand and withdrew.

The general again looked round him, and internally congratulating himself on his return to peaceful life, the comforts of which were endeared by the recollection of the hardships and dangers he had lately sustained, undressed himself, and prepared himself for a luxurious night's rest.

Here, contrary to the custom of this species of tale, we leave the general in possession of his apartment until the next morning.

The company assembled for breakfast at an early hour, but without the appearance of General Browne, who seemed the guest that Lord Woodville was desirous of honouring above all whom his hospitality had assembled around him. He more than once expressed surprise at the general's absence, and at length sent a servant to make inquiry after him. The man brought back information that General Browne had been walking abroad since an early hour of the morning, in defiance of the weather, which was misty and ungenial.

"The custom of a soldier," said the young nobleman to his friends; "many of them acquire habitual vigilance, and cannot sleep after the early hour at which their duty usually commands them to be alert."

Yet the explanation which Lord Woodville thus offered to the company seemed hardly satisfactory to his own mind, and it was in a fit of silence and abstraction that he awaited the return of the general. It took place near an hour after the breakfast bell had rung. He looked fatigued and feverish. His hair, the powdering and arrangement of which was at this time one of the most important occupations of a man's whole day, and marked his fashion as much as, in the present time, the tying of a cravat, or the want of one, was dishevelled, uncurled, void of powder, and dank with dew. His clothes were huddled on with a careless negligence, remarkable in a military man, whose real or supposed duties are usually held to include some attention to the toilet; and his looks were haggard and ghastly in a peculiar degree.

"So you have stolen a march upon us this morning, my dear General," said Lord Woodville; "or you have not found your bed so much to your mind as I had hoped and you seemed to expect. How did you rest last night?"

"Oh, excellently well! remarkably well! never better in my life," said General Browne rapidly, and yet with an air of embarrassment which was obvious to his friend. He then hastily swallowed a cup of tea, and, neglecting or refusing whatever else was offered, seemed to fall into a fit of abstraction.

"You will take the gun to-day, General?" said his friend and host, but had to repeat the question twice ere he received the abrupt answer, "No, my lord; I am sorry I cannot have the honour of spending another day with your lordship; my post horses are ordered, and will be here directly."

All who were present showed surprise, and Lord Woodville immediately replied, "Post horses, my good friend! What can you possibly want with them, when you promised to stay with me quietly for at least a week?"

"I believe," said the general, obviously much embarrassed, "that I might, in the pleasure of my first meeting with your lordship, have said something about stopping here a few days; but I have since found it altogether impossible."

"That is very extraordinary," answered the young nobleman. "You seemed quite disengaged yesterday, and you cannot have had a summons to-day; for our post has not come up from the town, and therefore you cannot have received any letters."

General Browne, without giving any further explanation, muttered something of indispensable business, and insisted on the absolute necessity of his departure in a manner which silenced all opposition on the part of his host, who saw that his resolution was taken, and forbore further importunity.

"At least, however," he said, "permit me, my dear Browne, since go you will or must, to show you the view from the terrace, which the mist, that is now rising, will soon display."

He threw open a sash-window, and stepped down upon the terrace as he spoke. The general followed him mechanically, but seemed little to attend to what his host was saying, as, looking across an extended and rich prospect, he pointed out the different objects worthy of observation. Thus they moved on till Lord Woodville had attained his purpose of drawing his guest entirely apart from the rest of the company, when, turning round upon him with an air of great solemnity, he addressed him thus:—

"Richard Browne, my old and very dear friend, we are now alone. Let me conjure you to answer me upon the word of a friend and the honour of a soldier. How did you in reality rest during last night?"

"Most wretchedly indeed, my lord," answered the general, in the same tone of solemnity; "so miserably, that I would not run the risk of such a second night, not only for all the lands belonging to this castle, but for all the country which I see from this elevated point of view."

"This is most extraordinary," said the young lord, as if speaking to himself; "then there must be something in the reports concerning that apartment." Again turning to the general, he said, "For God's sake, my dear friend, be candid with me, and let me know the disagreeable particulars which have befallen you under a roof, where, with consent of the owner, you should have met nothing save comfort."

The general seemed distressed by this appeal, and paused a moment before he replied. "My dear lord," he at length said, "what happened to me last night is of a nature so peculiar and so unpleasant, that I could hardly bring myself to detail it even to your lordship, were it not that, independent of my wish to gratify any request of yours, I think that sincerity on my part may lead to some explanation about a circumstance equally painful and mysterious. To others the communication I am about to make might place me in the light of a weak-minded, superstitious fool, who suffered his own imagination to delude and bewilder him; but you have known me in childhood and youth, and will not suspect me of having adopted in manhood the feelings and frailties from which my early years were free." Here he paused, and his friend replied, —

"Do not doubt my perfect confidence in the truth of your communication, however strange it may be," replied Lord Woodville; "I know your firmness of disposition too well to suspect you could be made the object of imposition, and am aware that your honour and your friendship will equally deter you from exaggerating whatever you may have witnessed."

"Well, then," said the general, "I will proceed with my story as well as I can, relying upon your candour; and yet distinctly feeling that I would rather face a battery than recall to my mind the odious recollections of last night."

He paused a second time, and then perceiving that Lord Woodville remained silent and in an attitude of attention, he commenced, though not without obvious reluctance, the history of his night adventures in the Tapestried Chamber.

"I undressed and went to bed so soon as your lordship left me yesterday evening; but the wood in the chimney, which nearly fronted my bed, blazed brightly and cheerfully, and aided by a hundred exciting recollections of my childhood and youth, which had been recalled by the unexpected pleasure of meeting your lordship, prevented me from falling immediately asleep. I ought, however, to say that these reflections were all of a pleasant and agreeable kind, grounded on a sense of having for a time exchanged the labour, fatigues, and dangers of my profession for the enjoyments of a peaceful life and the reunion of those friendly and affectionate ties which I had torn asunder at the rude summons of war.

"While such pleasing reflections were stealing over my mind, and gradually lulling me to slumber, I was suddenly aroused by a sound like that of the rustling of a silken gown, and the tapping of a pair of high-heeled shoes, as if a woman were walking in the apartment. Ere I could draw the curtain to see what the matter was, the figure of a little woman passed between the bed and the fire. The back of this form was turned to me, and I could observe from the shoulders and neck it was that of an old woman, whose dress was an old-fashioned

gown, which, I think, ladies call a sacque; that is, a sort of robe, completely loose in the body, but gathered into broad plaits upon the neck and shoulders, which fall down to the ground and terminate in a species of train.

"I thought the intrusion singular enough, but never harboured

"Advancing her diabolical countenance within half a yard of mine,' (p. 354).

for a moment the idea that what I saw was anything more than the mortal form of some old woman about the establishment who had a fancy to dress like her grandmother, and who, having perhaps (as your lordship mentioned that you were rather straitened for room) been dislodged from her chamber for my accommodation, had forgotten the circumstance, and returned by twelve to her old haunt. Under

this persuasion I moved myself in bed and coughed a little, to make the intruder sensible of my being in possession of the premises. She turned slowly round, but, gracious heaven! my lord, what a countenance did she display to me! There was no longer any question what she was, or any thought of her being a living being. Upon a face which wore the fixed features of a corpse were imprinted the traces of the vilest and most hideous passions which had animated her while she lived. The body of some atrocious criminal seemed to have been given up from the grave, and the soul restored from the penal fire, in order to form, for a space, a union with the ancient accomplice of its guilt. I started up in bed, and sat upright, supporting myself on my palms, as I gazed on this horrible spectre. The hag made, as it seemed, a single and swift stride to the bed where I lay, and squatted herself down upon it, in precisely the same attitude which I had assumed in the extremity of horror, advancing her diabolical countenance within half a yard of mine, with a grin which seemed to intimate the malice and derision of an incarnate fiend."

Here General Browne stopped, and wiped from his brow the cold perspiration with which the recollection of his horrible vision had covered it.

"My lord," he said, "I am no coward. I have been in all the mortal dangers incidental to my profession, and I may truly boast that no man ever knew Richard Browne dishonour the sword he wears; but in these horrible circumstances, under the eyes, and, as it seemed, almost in the grasp of an incarnation of an evil spirit, all firmness forsook me, all manhood melted from me like wax in the furnace, and I felt my hair individually bristle. The current of my life-blood ceased to flow, and I sank back in a swoon, as very a victim to panic terror as ever was a village girl, or a child of ten years old. How long I lay in this condition I cannot pretend to guess.

"But I was roused by the castle clock striking one, so loud that it seemed as if it were in the very room. It was some time before I dared open my eyes, lest they should again encounter the horrible spectacle. When, however, I summoned courage to look up, she was no longer visible. My first idea was to pull my bell, wake the servants, and remove to a garret or a hayloft, to be ensured against a second visitation. Nay, I will confess the truth, that my resolution was altered, not by the shame of exposing myself, but by the fear that, as the bell-cord hung by the chimney, I might, in making my way to it, be again crossed by the fiendish hag, who, I figured to myself, might be still lurking about some corner of the apartment.

"I will not pretend to describe what hot and cold fever-fits tormented me for the rest of the night, through broken sleep, weary vigils, and that dubious state which forms the neutral ground between them. A hundred terrible objects appeared to haunt me; but there was the great difference betwixt the vision which I have described and

those which followed, that I knew the last to be deceptions of my own fancy and over-excited nerves.

"Day at last appeared, and I rose from my bed ill in health and humiliated in mind. I was ashamed of myself as a man and a soldier, and still more so at feeling my own extreme desire to escape from the haunted apartment, which, however, conquered all other considerations; so that, huddling on my clothes with the most careless haste, I made my escape from your lordship's mansion to seek in the open air some relief to my nervous system, shaken as it was by this horrible rencounter with a visitant, for such I must believe her, from the other world. Your lordship has now heard the cause of my discomposure and of my sudden desire to leave your hospitable castle. In other places I trust we may often meet; but God protect me from ever spending a second night under that roof!"

Strange as the general's tale was, he spoke with such a deep air of conviction, that it cut short all the usual commentaries which are made on such stories. Lord Woodville never once asked him if he was sure he did not dream of the apparition, or suggested any of the possibilities by which it is fashionable to explain supernatural appearances, as wild vagaries of the fancy or deceptions of the optic nerves. On the contrary, he seemed deeply impressed with the truth and reality of what he had heard; and, after a considerable pause, regretted, with much appearance of sincerity, that his early friend should in his house have suffered so severely.

"I am the more sorry for your pain, my dear Browne," he continued, "that it is the unhappy, though most unexpected, result of an experiment of my own. You must know, that for my father and grandfather's time, at least, the apartment which was assigned to you last night had been shut on account of reports that it was disturbed by supernatural sights and noises. When I came, a few weeks since, into possession of the estate, I thought the accommodation which the castle afforded for my friends was not extensive enough to permit the inhabitants of the invisible world to retain possession of a comfortable sleeping apartment. I therefore caused the Tapestried Chamber, as we called it, to be opened; and, without destroying its air of antiquity, I had such new articles of furniture placed in it as became the modern times. Yet as the opinion that the room was haunted very strongly prevailed among the domestics, and was also known in the neighbourhood and to many of my friends, I feared some prejudice might be entertained by the first occupant of the Tapestried Chamber which might tend to revive the evil report which it had laboured under, and so disappoint my purpose of rendering it a useful part of the house. I must confess, my dear Browne, that your arrival yesterday, agreeable to me for a thousand reasons besides, seemed the most favourable opportunity of removing the unpleasant rumours which attached to the room, since your courage was indubitable, and your mind free of any pre-

occupation on the subject. I could not, therefore, have chosen a more fitting subject for my experiment."

"Upon my life," said General Browne, somewhat hastily, "I am infinitely obliged to your lordship—very particularly indebted indeed. I am likely to remember for some time the consequences of the experiment, as your lordship is pleased to call it."

"Nay, now you are unjust, my dear friend," said Lord Woodville. "You have only to reflect for a single moment, in order to be convinced that I could not augur the possibility of the pain to which you have been so unhappily exposed. I was yesterday morning a complete sceptic on the subject of supernatural appearances. Nay, I am sure that had I told you what was said about that room, these very reports would have induced you, by your own choice, to select it for your accommodation. It was my misfortune, perhaps my error, but really cannot be termed my fault, that you have been afflicted so strangely."

"Strangely indeed!" said the general, resuming his good temper; "and I acknowledge that I have no right to be offended with your lordship for treating me like what I used to think myself—a man of some firmness and courage. But I see my post horses are arrived, and I must not detain your lordship from your amusement."

"Nay, my old friend," said Lord Woodville, "since you cannot stay with us another day, which, indeed, I can no longer urge, give me at least half an hour more. You used to love pictures, and I have a gallery of portraits, some of them by Vandyke, representing ancestry to whom this property and castle formerly belonged. I think that several of them will strike you as possessing merit."

General Browne accepted the invitation, though somewhat unwillingly. It was evident he was not to breathe freely or at ease till he left Woodville Castle far behind him. He could not refuse his friend's invitation, however; and the less so, that he was a little ashamed of the peevishness which he had displayed towards his well-meaning entertainer.

The general, therefore, followed Lord Woodville through several rooms into a long gallery hung with pictures, which the latter pointed out to his guest, telling the names, and giving some account of the personages whose portraits presented themselves in progression. General Browne was but little interested in the details which these accounts conveyed to him. They were, indeed, of the kind which are usually found in an old family gallery. Here was a cavalier who had ruined the estate in the royal cause; there a fine lady who had reinstated it by contracting a match with a wealthy Roundhead. There hung a gallant who had been in danger for corresponding with the exiled Court at Saint Germain's; here, one who had taken arms for William at the Revolution; and there, a third that had thrown his weight alternately into the scale of Whig and Tory.

While Lord Woodville was cramming these words into his guest's

ear, "against the stomach of his sense," they gained the middle of the gallery, when he beheld General Browne suddenly start, and assume an attitude of the utmost surprise, not unmixed with fear, as his eyes were caught and suddenly riveted by a portrait of an old lady in a sacque, the fashionable dress of the end of the seventeenth century.

"There she is!" he exclaimed; "there she is, in form and features, though inferior in demoniac expression to the accursed hag who visited me last night!"

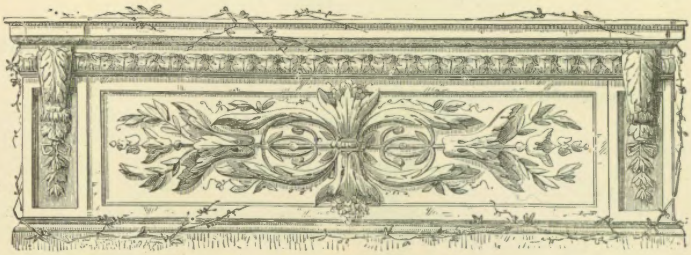
"If that be the case," said the young nobleman, "there can remain no longer any doubt of the horrible reality of your apparition. That is the picture of a wretched ancestress of mine, of whose crimes a black and fearful catalogue is recorded in a family history in my charter-chest. The recital of them would be too horrible; it is enough to say that in yon fatal apartment incest and unnatural murder were committed. I will restore it to the solitude to which the better judgment of those who preceded me had consigned it; and never shall any one, so long as I can prevent it, be exposed to a repetition of the supernatural horrors which could shake such courage as yours."

Thus the friends, who had met with such glee, parted in a very different mood; Lord Woodville to command the Tapestried Chamber to be unmantled and the door built up, and General Browne to seek in some less beautiful country, and with some less dignified friend, forgetfulness of the painful night which he had passed in Woodville Castle.

DEATH OF THE LAIRD'S JOCK.

[The manner in which this trifle was introduced at the time to Mr. F. M. Reynolds, editor of *The Keepsake* of 1828, leaves no occasion for a preface.]

August, 1831.



DEATH OF THE LAIRD'S JOCK.

TO THE EDITOR OF *THE KEEPSAKE.*

YOU have asked me, sir, to point out a subject for the pencil, and I feel the difficulty of complying with your request; although I am not certainly unaccustomed to literary composition, or a total stranger to the stores of history and tradition, which afford the best copies for the painter's art. But although *sicut pictura poesis* is an ancient and undisputed axiom—although poetry and painting both address themselves to the same object of exciting the human imagination, by presenting to it pleasing or sublime images of ideal scenes; yet the one conveying itself through the ears to the understanding, and the other applying itself only to the eyes, the subjects which are best suited to the bard or tale-teller are often totally unfit for painting, where the artist must present in a single glance all that his art has power to tell us. The artist can neither recapitulate the past nor intimate the future. The single *now* is all which he can present; and hence, unquestionably, many subjects which delight us in poetry or in narrative, whether real or fictitious, cannot with advantage be transferred to the canvas.

Being in some degree aware of these difficulties, though doubtless unacquainted both with their extent and the means by which they may be modified or surmounted, I have, nevertheless, ventured to draw up the following traditional narrative as a story in which, when the general details are known, the interest is so much concentrated in one strong moment of agonising passion, that it can be understood and sympathised with at a single glance. I therefore presume that it may be acceptable as a hint to some one among the numerous artists

who have of late years distinguished themselves as rearing up and supporting the British school.

Enough has been said and sung about

> "The well-contested ground,
> The warlike border-land"

to render the habits of the tribes who inhabited them before the union of England and Scotland familiar to most of your readers. The rougher and sterner features of their character were softened by their attachment to the fine arts, from which has arisen the saying that, on the frontiers, every dale had its battle and every river its song. A rude species of chivalry was in constant use, and single combats were practised as the amusement of the few intervals of truce which suspended the exercise of war. The inveteracy of this custom may be inferred from the following incident.

Bernard Gilpin, the apostle of the north, the first who undertook to preach the Protestant doctrines to the border dalesmen, was surprised, on entering one of their churches, to see a gauntlet or mail-glove hanging above the altar. Upon inquiring the meaning of a symbol so indecorous being displayed in that sacred place, he was informed by the clerk that the glove was that of a famous swordsman, who hung it there as an emblem of a general challenge and gage of battle to any who should dare to take the fatal token down. "Reach it to me," said the reverend churchman. The clerk and sexton equally declined the perilous office; and the good Bernard Gilpin was obliged to remove the glove with his own hands, desiring those who were present to inform the champion, that he, and no other, had possessed himself of the gage of defiance. But the champion was as much ashamed to face Bernard Gilpin as the officials of the church had been to displace his pledge of combat.

The date of the following story is about the latter years of Queen Elizabeth's reign; and the events took place in Liddesdale, a hilly and pastoral district of Roxburghshire, which, on a part of its boundary, is divided from England only by a small river.

During the good old times of *rugging and riving* (that is, tugging and tearing), under which term the disorderly doings of the warlike age are affectionately remembered, this valley was principally cultivated by the sept or clan of the Armstrongs. The chief of this warlike race was the laird of Mangerton. At the period of which I speak, the estate of Mangerton, with the power and dignity of chief, was possessed by John Armstrong, a man of great size, strength, and courage. While his father was alive he was distinguished from others of his clan who bore the same name by the epithet of the *Laird's Jock*; that is to say, the Laird's son, Jock, or Jack. This name he distinguished by so many bold and desperate achievements that he retained it even after his father's death, and is mentioned under it both in authentic records and in tradition. Some of his

feats are recorded in the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, and others mentioned in contemporary chronicles.

At the species of singular combat which we have described, the Laird's Jock was unrivalled; and no champion of Cumberland, Westmoreland, or Northumberland could endure the sway of the huge two-handed sword which he wielded, and which few others could even lift. This "awful sword," as the common people term it, was as dear to him as Durindana or Fushberta to their respective masters, and was nearly as formidable to his enemies as those renowned falchions proved to the foes of Christendom. The weapon had been bequeathed to him by a celebrated English outlaw named Hobbie Noble, who, having committed some deed for which he was in danger from justice, fled to Liddesdale, and became a follower, or rather a brother-in-arms, to the renowned Laird's Jock; till, venturing into England with a small escort, a faithless guide, and with a light single-handed sword instead of his ponderous brand, Hobbie Noble, attacked by superior numbers, was made prisoner and executed.

With this weapon, and by means of his own strength and address, the Laird's Jock maintained the reputation of the best swordsman on the border side, and defeated or slew many who ventured to dispute with him the formidable title.

But years pass on with the strong and the brave as with the feeble and the timid. In process of time the Laird's Jock grew incapable of wielding his weapons, and finally of all active exertion, even of the most ordinary kind. The disabled champion became at length totally bed-ridden, and entirely dependent for his comfort on the pious duties of an only daughter, his perpetual attendant and companion.

Besides this dutiful child, the Laird's Jock had an only son, upon whom devolved the perilous task of leading the clan to battle and maintaining the warlike renown of his native country, which was now disputed by the English upon many occasions. The young Armstrong was active, brave, and strong, and brought home from dangerous adventures many tokens of decided success. Still the ancient chief conceived, as it would seem, that his son was scarce yet entitled by age and experience to be entrusted with the two-handed sword, by the use of which he had himself been so dreadfully distinguished.

At length, an English champion, one of the name of Foster (if I rightly recollect), had the audacity to send a challenge to the best swordsman in Liddesdale; and young Armstrong, burning for chivalrous distinction, accepted the challenge.

The heart of the disabled old man swelled with joy when he heard that the challenge was passed and accepted, and the meeting fixed at a neutral spot, used as the place of rencontre upon such occasions, and which he himself had distinguished by numerous victories. He exulted so much in the conquest which he anticipated, that to nerve his son to still bolder exertions he conferred upon him, as champion of his clan

and province, the celebrated weapon which he had hitherto retained in his own custody..

This was not all. When the day of combat arrived, the Laird's Jock, in spite of his daughter's affectionate remonstrances, determined, though he had not left his bed for two years, to be a personal witness of the duel. His will was still a law to his people, who bore him on their shoulders, wrapped in plaids and blankets, to the spot where the combat was to take place, and seated him on a fragment of rock, which is still called the Laird's Jock's stone. There he remained with eyes fixed on the lists or barrier, within which the champions were about to meet. His daughter, having done all she could for his accommodation, stood motionless beside him, divided between anxiety for his health and for the event of the combat to her beloved brother. Ere yet the fight began, the old men gazed on their chief, now seen for the first time after several years, and sadly compared his altered features and wasted frame with the paragon of strength and manly beauty which they once remembered. The young men gazed on his large form and powerful make, as upon some antediluvian giant who had survived the destruction of the Flood.

But the sound of the trumpets on both sides recalled the attention of every one to the lists, surrounded as they were by numbers of both nations eager to witness the event of the day. The combatants met. It is needless to describe the struggle: the Scottish champion fell. Foster, placing his foot on his antagonist, seized on the redoubted sword, so precious in the eyes of its aged owner, and brandished it over his head as a trophy of his conquest. The English shouted in triumph. But the despairing cry of the aged champion, who saw his country dishonoured, and his sword, long the terror of their race, in possession of an Englishman, was heard high above the acclamations of victory. He seemed, for an instant, animated by all his wonted power; for he started from the rock on which he sat, and while the garments with which he had been invested fell from his wasted frame, and showed the ruins of his strength, he tossed his arms wildly to heaven, and uttered a cry of indignation, horror, and despair, which, tradition says, was heard to a preternatural distance, and resembled the cry of a dying lion more than a human sound.

His friends received him in their arms as he sank utterly exhausted by the effort, and bore him back to his castle in mute sorrow; while his daughter at once wept for her brother and endeavoured to mitigate and soothe the despair of her father. But this was impossible; the old man's only tie to life was rent rudely asunder, and his heart had broken with it. The death of his son had no part in his sorrow. If he thought of him at all, it was as the degenerate boy through whom the honour of his country and clan had been lost; and he died in the course of three days, never even mentioning his name, but pouring out unremitted lamentations for the loss of his sword.

I conceive that the instant when the disabled chief was roused into a last exertion by the agony of the moment is favourable to the object of a painter. He might obtain the full advantage of contrasting the form of the rugged old man, in the extremity of furious despair, with the softness and beauty of the female form. The fatal field might be thrown into perspective, so as to give full effect to these two principal figures, and with the single explanation that the piece represented a soldier beholding his son slain, and the honour of his country lost, the picture would be sufficiently intelligible at the first glance. If it was thought necessary to show more clearly the nature of the conflict, it might be indicated by the pennon of St. George being displayed at one end of the lists and that of St. Andrew at the other. I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR OF WAVERLEY.